BRANDS TAKING A STAND ON SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ORGANISATIONS BEHIND THE SCENES

Dissertation submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa
to obtain a
Master's Degree in Communication, Marketing and Advertising

By

Ricarda Carla Drewes

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I Abstract

Nowadays, more and more organisations take public stances in favour or against environmental-, ecological-, workplace-, legal-, social-, and political concerns. This is caused by numerous factors, but is being demanded by consumers who increasingly base their purchase decisions on brands' non-business related actions, like brand activism practises. This rather recent phenomenon outreaches CSR actions, as it discusses a broader variety of topics, such as equal rights, racism, etc. Further, brand activism calls for a much louder communication, which may evoke controversial debates in society and thus, may put engaging organisations onto risk. Also, if not practised authentically, organisations may be accused to follow woke washing. Therefore, brand activism is a quite sensitive but also increasingly important approach to implement in a firm's marketing strategy.

As there was no evidence found that the existing body of literature in brand activism covers comprehensive insights about the organisations' perspectives, the aim of this thesis was to contribute to the field of research by investigating internal processes behind the commitment to brand activism. Hence, the research question is: How do companies organise themselves around the process of making a stand on socio-political issues?

To answer this question, the thesis sets out to explain first, concepts of branding, and second, the phenomenon of brand activism as defined in current literature. A qualitative research approach was carried out by conducting interviews with CEOs and communication managers of organisations engaging in brand activism. Subsequently, the raw data was analysed and evaluated in regards to the research question and three derived propositions. To analyse the raw data accordingly, a coding system was implemented on the basis of the theoretical brand activism framework by Pimentel and Didonet (2021).

In conclusion, the thesis argues that the entire process behind brand activism is mainly guided by the company's values. Thus, it is fundamental for brand activists to define a brand's identity and involve all employees so that they can also base individual decisions and actions correspondingly. Further, it was found that none of the interviewed organisations followed an action plan, but rather had open discussions when topics were highly critical.

Key words: brand activism, socio-political issues, socio-political advocacy, brand identity, brand values, brand purpose

II Resumo

Hoje em dia, cada vez mais organizações assumem posições públicas a favor ou contra preocupações ambientais, ecológicas, laborais, jurídicas, sociais e políticas. Isto é causado por inúmeros factores, mas é exigido pelos consumidores, que cada vez mais baseiam as suas decisões de compra em acções não relacionadas com as marcas, como as práticas de activismo de marcas. Este fenómeno bastante recente ultrapassa acções de RSC, uma vez que discute uma maior variedade de tópicos, tais como igualdade de direitos, racismo, etc. Além disso, o activismo de marcas apela a uma comunicação muito mais sonora, que pode suscitar debates controversos na sociedade e, por conseguinte, pode pôr em risco organizações ativas nestes temas. Além disso, se não forem praticadas de forma autêntica, as organizações podem ser acusadas de seguir práticas de *woke washing*[1]. Por conseguinte, o activismo de marcas é uma abordagem bastante sensível mas também cada vez mais importante a implementar na estratégia de marketing de uma empresa.

Uma vez que não foram encontradas fontes de literatura sobre activismo de marca que abranjam de forma exaustiva a perspectiva das organizações, o objectivo desta tese é contribuir para o conhecimento científico através da investigação dos processos internos que suportam o compromisso com o activismo de marca. Assim, a questão da investigação é: Como é que as empresas se organizam em torno do processo de tomada de posição sobre questões sócio-políticas?

Para responder a esta pergunta, a tese pretende explicar, em primeiro lugar, os conceitos de branding e, em segundo lugar, o fenómeno do activismo de marcas, tal como definido na literatura actual. Foi efetuada uma abordagem qualitativa de investigação através da realização de entrevistas com CEOs e gestores de comunicação de organizações envolvidas no activismo de marcas. Subsequentemente, os dados foram analisados e avaliados em relação à questão da investigação e a três proposições derivadas. Para analisar estes dados em conformidade, foi implementado um sistema de codificação com base no quadro teórico de activismo de marca de Pimentel e Didonet (2021).

Finalmente, a tese conclui que todo o processo por detrás do activismo da marca é principalmente guiado pelos valores da empresa. Assim, é fundamental que os activistas de

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[1] Práticas de aparente consciência social mas sem substância. Conceito será explicitado no subcapítulo 2.2.2.

marcas definam a identidade de uma marca e envolvam todos os colaboradores de modo a que também possam basear as decisões e acções individuais de forma correspondente. Além disso, verificou-se que nenhuma das organizações entrevistadas segue um plano de acção, mas ao invés disso promovem discussões abertas quando os tópicos são altamente críticos.

Palavras-chave: activismo de marca, questões sócio-políticas, defesa sócio-política, identidade de marca, valores de marca, propósito da marca

III Acknowledgments

IV Statement of original authorship

"I declare that I have used no other sources and aids other than those indicated in this master thesis. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are indicated as such, i.e. cited and/or attributed. This thesis was not submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. I hereby agree that my thesis is reviewed and checked on eventual plagiarism with the help of a plagiarism detection program."

Munich, 14.11.2021

Ricarda Carla Drewes

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CI	Corporate Identity
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
p.	page
pp.	pages

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Traditionally, brands pursue marketing strategies by positioning themselves among consumers through their performance characteristics (Pimentel and Didonet, 2021, p. 2). In order to sustain in the competitive marketing environment, brands need to differentiate from one another, meaning "positioning is no longer enough" (Sarkar and Kotler, 2017). Today, they are expected to go beyond traditional promotion of goods or services and make use of the brand voice for the greater good (Kelly, 2021). Especially younger generations, who are highly involved in social movements and protests await brands to stand up against socio-political issues (Kotler and Sarkar, 2018). Hence, Kotler and Sarkar (2018) defined the phenomenon of **"brand activism"** as business effort which "promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to promote or impede improvements in society.". According to the authors, there are six areas companies can address in brand activism, namely social-, workplace-, political-, environmental-, economic-, and legal activism. In general, when companies adopt brand activism they are understood as being more responsible and take active and public stances in favour or against what is seen as right or wrong (Moorman, 2020; Pimentel and Didonet, 2021, p. 2). Therefore, brand activism is considered to be much more effective than concepts like corporate social responsibility (CSR). Not only because brand activism discusses a broader variety of topics than CSR, but also because its communication is much louder and the promoted issues must not necessarily align with the core business (Pimentel and Didonet, 2021, p. 3). However, research only started studying the phenomenon quite recently, which explains why it was not found a common alignment in its definition (p. 1).

As an example, in contrast to Kotler and Sarkar (2020), who see brand activism as a societal-driven approach (externally driven), Vredenburg et al. (2020) define brand activism as value-driven (internally driven). While Vredenburg et al. put emphasis on the authenticity of brand activism which is only given when companies follow their core values, Kotler and Sarkar identify brand activism when companies verbally address societal concerns, without questioning the real actions. In other words, authentic brand activism defined by Vredenburg et al. is only followed when the external communication of the organisation is somehow being practised inside the organisation, too. This is particularly important for younger generations, like generation Z and millennials, who are known for basing their purchase decisions on the

organisations' purpose and values (Wiley, 2020). According to a study made by the Futures Company in 2014, 68 percent of consumers would rather buy from brands addressing socio-political issues and correspondingly contributing to social change. In addition, the Edelman Trust Barometer 2017 found that 75 percent of the consumers believe in brands being able to stay profitable while acting social towards communities (Kemming and Rommerskirchen, 2019, p. 11).

Nevertheless, companies which take public stances always take a risk, as the consumers' opinions vary and boycotts can evoke (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 444). This again leads to the importance of authenticity in brand activism. Consumers more and more distinguish between brands who actually add meaningful change and those who follow woke washing practises (Wiley, 2020). In addition, not only consumers but also other stakeholder groups, like potential employees, draw attention to a brands' reputation. As an example, similar to placing a buying decision, people tend to job hunt based on aligning own values and beliefs to the ones by the potential new employer.

1.2 Research purpose and question

Even though "The Body Shop's" founder Anita Roddick was practising a value-driven approach in 1976 already (Kotler and Sarkar, 2018; Aaker, 1996, pp. 108), global research only started to study about it recently (Koch, 2020, p. 593). Regardless from the growing managerial relevance of the phenomenon, the body of literature mainly takes the consumer's perspective, rather than exploring the organisation's perspective (Pimentel and Didionet, 2021, p. 1; Koch, 2020, p. 593). Consequently, existing research lacks insights into how brands can become authentic activists by assembling socio-political debates into their communications but at the same time implement actions to address the same (Koch, 2020, p. 593).

Therefore, the following research thesis aims to complement previous research and illuminate internal insights of organisations taking controversial public stances. A hand full of companies are being interviewed to further understand whether their publically addressed socio-political issues are also being actively approached and how. The purpose of this thesis is to set a foundation of how companies engaging in brand activism organise themselves in a world of continuously arising new socio-political debates. Therefore, the literature review illustrates an understanding of the concept brand activism, but will be starting with giving further insights into the theory of branding. In order to capture brand activism as a business

approach, the theoretical framework of the Brazilian researchers Pimentel and Didionet will be explored in detail.

With the aim of filling the gap and adding to the existing state of research, this thesis poses the following research question:

How do companies organise themselves around the process of making a stand on socio-political issues?

In the interest of answering the research question, the theoretical framework will help guide the research so that the phenomenon will be enlightened from all different angles. Therefore, this study aims to expound a practical standpoint of brand activism by combining it with the existing body of research literature. However, it will contribute to present research by illuminating the internal perspective of companies which take a stand on socio-political issues publically. Consequently, the results of this research will provide guidance on how organisations organise themselves to participate in brand activism authentically.

1.3 Outline of the thesis

This study is divided into six main chapters. In the first introductory chapter, the reader should gain a rough understanding of the researcher's motivation by giving some background and context about the chosen topic. Thus, the relevance of the phenomenon along with the research aim and objectives is being outlined. The second chapter will then elaborate the existing body of literature divided into two subchapters, namely, **"defining brands"** and **"brand activism"**. Both chapters will be covering a summary of key authors and concepts. While chapter 2.1 provides a general understanding of branding, chapter 2.2 will be building up on that, explaining the concept of brand activism in a marketing perspective. Further, the methodological choice of this study will be presented. Therefore, chapter three will start with introducing the philosophy, the approach and the design of the research. This will be followed by the data collection method, the analysis, validity and limitations, and finally an outline of ethical considerations regarding this research. In the fourth chapter, the data collection will be analysed, to be then discussed in chapter five. Finally, chapter six of the study will be completed by the resume of the main findings, practical implications and future research indications.

2 Literature review

2.1 Defining brands

2.1.1 Definition of brand

According to Alvardo-Karste and Guzmán (2020) "strong brands enjoy a vast array of benefits such as increased levels of brand loyalty and the ability to charge price premiums" (p. 927). Customers like to buy brands they identify with and feel connected to in order portray their social personas and build up a sense of belonging to the brand's community (Alvarado-Karste and Guzmán, 2020, p. 927; Kaufmann, Cerreia and Manarioti, 2016, p. 519). The sense of belonging and the opportunity to express personality and beliefs through a brand can create long lasting brand loyalty and even contribute to brand love. Even though a brand is an asset that does not have physical existence, it can add shareholder value to the company (Kenton, 2020; Nandan, 2004, p. 264). However, the value cannot be determined precisely "unless it becomes the subject of a specific business transaction of sale and acquisition" (Seetharaman, Nadzir and Gunalan, 2001, p. 243). It is important to differentiate brands from the company, the logo, the name or the trademark (McLaughlin, 2011). The author explains it as follows:

> "your brand is what your prospect thinks of when he or she hears your brand name. It's everything the public thinks it knows about your name brand offering—both factual (e.g. It comes in a robin's-egg-blue box), and emotional (e.g. It's romantic). Your brand name exists objectively; people can see it. It's fixed. But your brand exists only in someone's mind." (McLaughlin, 2011).

However, the perceptions shaping a brand are influenced by many stakeholders, i.e. consumers (Cova and Paranque, 2016; Kaufmann, Cerreia and Manarioti, 2016), employees (Indounas and Arvaniti, 2015; Judson et al., 2006; Kaufmann et al., 2016), or other stakeholders having another point of view or touch point with the brand. Whatever stakeholders say, believe and/or express about a brand impacts the market's perception about it. Nowadays, even political views of well-known top managers of a company (e.g. via Twitter) may influence perceptions of that brand (Leak et al., 2015 by Veloutsou and Guzman, 2017, p. 4). All of the individual's perceptions combined shape the individual brand image (Nandan, 2004, p. 266).

According to Stephen King from WPP Group, one of the biggest creative transformation companies worldwide, "A product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by a customer. A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated; a successful brand is timeless." (Seetharaman, Nadzir and Gunalan, 2001, p. 243). However, brands subsequently shape the perception of products or

services, too (McLaughlin, 2011; Kenton, 2020; Veloutsou and Guzman, 2017, p. 4). Thinking of brands selling almost the same product, e.g. Pepsi and Coca-Cola, consumers still tend to prefer one over the other. This phenomenon is mainly due to branding, not the product itself. Therefore, Kapferer (2012) explains: "The brand's deepest values must be reflected in the external signs of recognition, and these must be apparent at first glance." (p. 150). Additionally, Keller defines a brand as "a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service' (Keller, 1998). A brand must differentiate on the market and show what makes itself unique. In other words, "Brands can only exist if they communicate." (Kapferer, 2012, p. 163).

2.1.2 Brand positioning

According to most literature, brand positioning is said to differentiate a brand from its competitors beyond price and quality attributes (Sujan, and Bettman, 1989, p. 454; Dou et al., 2010, p. 262; Bronnenberg and Wathieu, 1996, pp. 379-394). It is competition-oriented (Kapferer, 2008, p. 178) and creates the main differences in a specific market, at a certain time for certain products or services (Kapferer, 2012, p.149). Positioning can be explained answering four fundamental questions: For whom? Why? When and against whom? Consumers have to make a choice, so the brand must communicate what makes it unique in order to maintain and survive on the market. Today in particular, when the global market confronts consumers with increasing choices, positioning assumes a merely important role in branding. The concept starts with the customer, meaning externally, whereas the concept of brand identity employs its intangible and tangible characteristics, shaping the brand from the inside to the outside (Kapferer, 2012, p. 156). When customers have to make a purchasing choice, it raises two questions in their minds: First, what do they compare it with? For this, the field of competition needs to be considered. Second, what is the offering to the customer as a key decision-making factor? If a brand does not position itself, it leaves these two questions unanswered. In Kapferer's words: "Remember, products increase customer choice; brands simplify it." (p. 178). Hence, the two questions should clearly be answered by the brand already. Before the customer gets into the situation, he or she should know the answers. By providing the information the brand helps its customers to make an easier decision, regardless from price and quality. Therefore, when positioning the brand's aim is to identify and take control of a "strong purchasing rationale that gives (the customer) a real or perceived advantage" (p. 178). "This is why a brand that does not want to stand for something stands for nothing." so says Kapferer (2008, p. 178).

2.1.3 Brand identity and brand image

The concepts of brand identity and brand image are related and essential for a strong brand. According to Nandan (2016) these two concepts need to be in harmony in order to build and maintain brand loyalty (p. 266). A **"brand image"** relates to the sum of perceptions of the brand which is individually created in the minds of consumers. **"Brand identity"** however, is defined as "a unique set of brand associations implying a promise to customers and includes a core and extended identity" (Ghodeswar, 2008, p. 5). This definition is aligned with Aaker's (1996) understanding, saying that brand identity is "a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain" (p. 68). It further "promotes trust, enables differentiation from competitors, includes a promise to customers, and predicts the organisation's actions in the future" (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2002). In other words, having said that a brand identity is a promise to the customer, it is something which needs to be defined within the organisation, and somehow transmitted to the consumers. Nandan (2005) differs the two concepts by explaining that the "brand message is 'packaged' or 'wrapped' in terms of brand identity, and it is 'unpackaged' or 'unwrapped' by the consumer in the form of brand image" (p. 268). Therefore, a brand's identity relates to a company's actions, whereas a brand's image relates to what consumers think and/or feel about that brand. Furthermore, Alvarado-Karste and Guzmán (2020) claim that the brand's performance depends on the "congruence between consumer perceptions about the brand (i.e. brand image) and the firm's brands message (i.e. brand identity)" (p. 972). The consumer's feelings and beliefs about a brand can continually change over time (de Chernatony, 1999, p. 159), which is why brands should have a clearly established strategy of how to communicate its identity and values (Nandan, 2016, p. 265). Also, by having defined a brand's identity, employees will better understand how to behave in order to align with the company's personality (de Chernetony, 1999, p. 160; Kaufmann, Cerreia and Manarioti, 2016, p. 520; Muhonen, Hirvonen and Laukkanen, 2017, p. 6). "The challenge is to blend the personality presented through the media, with supporting congruent staff behaviour." (de Chernetony, 1999, p. 168).

Consequently, everything which is being promised outside the organisation, especially to the customers, should be openly communicated and lived inside the organisational culture as well (Muhonen, Hirvonen and Laukkanen, 2017, p. 33). To exemplify, the story of "The Body Shop" will be illustrated. The Body Shop is a global manufacturer and retailer of skin and hair care products and was founded by Anita Roddick in England 1976. In contrast to other cosmetic brands it did not focus on glamorous packaging and heavy advertisement but a rather hype-free

presentation focusing on their brand values. At that time, the Body Shop's fairly unique approach using natural ingredients from less industrialised countries contributed to firstly, much-needed job creation in poorer countries and secondly, waste reduction to lower environmental impact through consumption. Furthermore, the company is known for developing their products without any animal testing, using simple and refillable packages and appealing for petitions, e.g. they have successfully collected millions of signatures against burning the Amazon rain forest. By the belief of the female founder Anita Roddick, not only creating sense of purpose for the customers but also the employees should be priority. Her philosophy is that working for a purpose is more rewarding and involving than the organisational profits. Saying that "The Body Shop has soul – don't lose it." and stating that "goals and values are as important as our products and profits" a clear behavioural guideline for the employees to follow is being provided. According to Aaker (1996), who describes the story of The Body Shop in his book "Building strong Brands", points out that the company's "dedicated posture provides a point of real differentiation that stimulates loyalty and commitment from customers" (pp. 108-109). He further states that the Body Shop's mission "is not merely to sell cosmetics, but to create a global community" (p. 108) and to encourage to environmental and social change (p. 109), which is emphasising the statement that defining a brand's identity is much more than designing a logo or other visual elements for the brand (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998, p. 1082). To sum up, "to create a strong brand image, a company must develop a congruent brand identity and consistently communicate it through its different channels and brand touchpoints" (Alvarado-Karste and Guzman, 2020, p. 971). In addition, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002) suggest that the brand identity should further hold a grasp of what the organisation is planning for the future, namely the brand's vision as one brand identity component.

2.1.4 Brand identity models

There are many brand related concepts, namely, brand personality, brand culture, etc. In order to give a clearer understanding of how those terms are related, the brand identity prism by Jean-Noël Kapferer will be illustrated. Most researchers support their work based on Kapferer's brand identity prism, which was first established in 1997, but got further developed over time. His hexagonal identity prism model is a tool to understand essential differences between brands and its competitors and is based on six facets of a brand: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection and self-image (Kapferer, 2012, pp. 158). It is built on the same principle as before mentioned, a picture of the sender, which is defined and communicated

through the brand's identity and a picture of the recipient, which is the sum of what the outside world perceives of a brand.
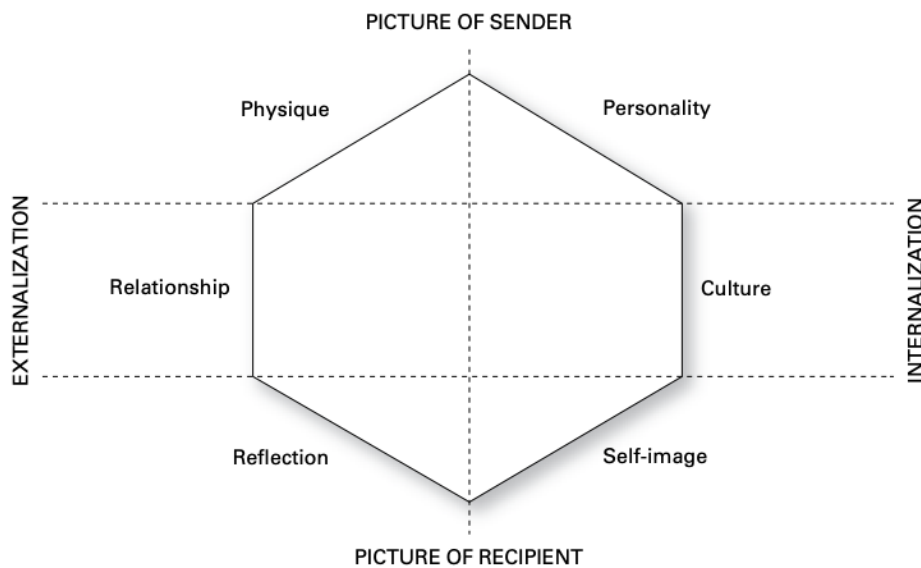
Figure 1: "Brand Identity Prism" by Kapferer, 2012, p. 158

Starting with **"physique"**, that is to say the brands physical characteristics, as it is the first thing which comes to mind when thinking about a brand. Its visual features help consumers to identify a brand. Brands are wrapped into "physical specificities and qualities", preferably contributing to its "tangible value" (Kapferer, 2012, p. 158). The physical appearance of a brand are often its colours, logo and the packaging. Another facet of the brands identity prism explains the brand's **"personality"**. It is the main source of tone and style of advertising. Every brand has its own human personality traits which helps how to communicate with its customers. It involves the way its speaks and what kind of attitude it presents. Some brands (e.g. Nespresso using Gorge Clooney) also make use of famous characters to represent a brand (Kapferer, 2012, p. 159) and create brand related emotional characteristics (Nandan, 2005, p. 266). Furthermore, a brand is a **"culture"**. According to Kapferer, strong brands should be much more than product benefits and personality, but merely an ideology (p.159). He points out that a brand culture is the most important facet of the brands' identity, which is the key to differentiates between brands like Reebok, Adidas and Nike (p. 159). One only becomes a cult brand when the brand creates its own guiding principles. By doing so brands create their community around the causes, ideals, ideas and values it stands for (p. 160). With regards to Maslow's pyramid of needs[2], Kapferer further emphasises that hyper-consumption today creates emptiness, not

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[2] For more information: Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–396.

happiness. The industrialised countries in the world have reached the top level of Maslow's pyramid, namely self-actualisation, which is Kapferer indicates the importance for brands to create meaning beyond product or service supply. As a forth facet, a brand is also a **"relationship"** which "defines the mode of conduct that most identifies the brand" (p. 162). It implicates the way the brands act, deliver service and relate with their customers. This aspect of a brand is especially crucial when providing a service, e.g. for banks (p. 161). Another element of the brand identity prism is the customer **"reflection"**. It is built up over time and can be explained as stereotypical customer of a brand. Hence, it is a reflection made by the brand of their own target audience, but rather by reflecting as "he/she wishes to be seen as a result of using the brand" (p. 162) than by describing the target group. Target and reflection often get confused. When advertising, the brand should always portray the brands reflection, meaning what the customer wishes to be, in order to create the urge to purchase the product or make use of the service. Finally, the sixth element of the prism refers to the **"self-image"** the customers create when buying certain brands. As an example, Kapferer refers to Porsche owners, who mostly purchase such a luxury car to prove themselves that they have the ability to buy it. However, it must not be a luxury product to fulfil someone's self-image. It can be anything the person likes to identify him- or herself with. All these facets are interrelated and should form a well-structured entity. The creator of the brand identity prism emphasis that his model "drives from one basic concept – that brands have the gift of speech." (p. 163). Every form of communication needs a recipient and the reflection and self-image help defining it. The sender of the message is defined by its physique and personality which are built upon the brands purpose. The other two facets, namely relationship and culture connect the sender with the recipient (Kapferer, 2012, p. 163).

In the academic literature, some researchers do not fully align with Kapferer's selection of elements belonging to brand identity. As an alternative, Leslie de Chernatony (1999) suggests the following components forming the brand's identity: brand vision, brand culture, brand positioning, brand relationships, and brand presentation. She developed an application for organisations to check the coherence of their intended brand identity.
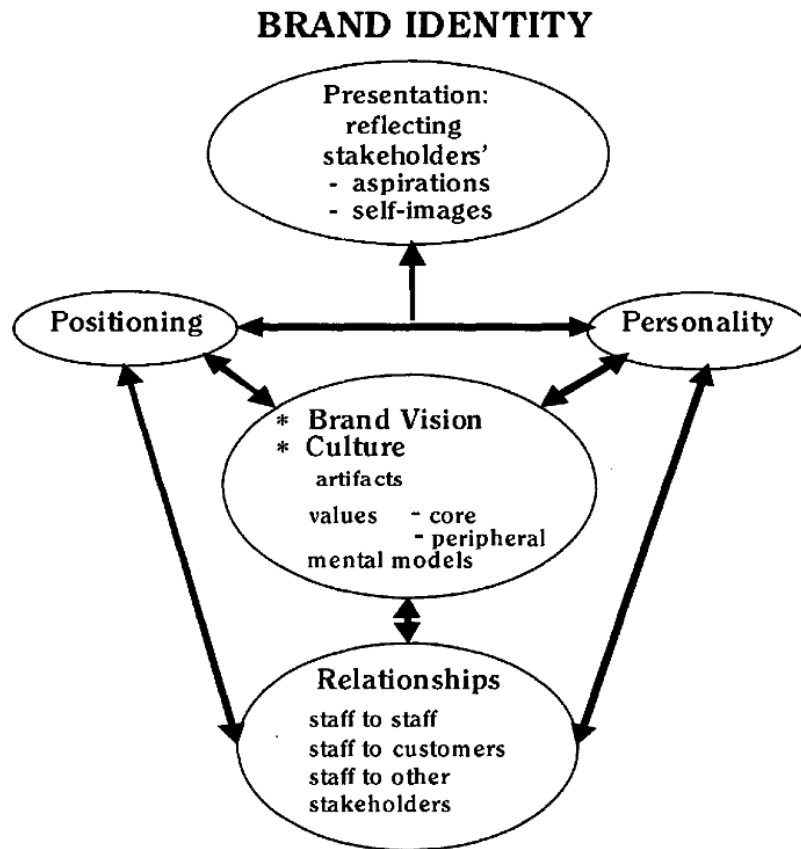
BRAND IDENTITY

Figure 2: "The Components of Brand Identity" by de Chernatony, 1999, p. 166

According to her, the "**brand's vision**" sets a "well-defined sense of direction" to "thrive a brand" (p. 166). She further refers to the authors Collins and Poras (1996) who say that mangers need to envisage the brand's environment at least five years ahead and consider how it's going to make the future world a better place. Therefore, an independent person should collect the team's individual perspectives and then holding a workshop to present and debate different views to reach a consensus. In addition, the "**brand's culture**" should develop and refine a strategy appropriate for such a vison. Therefore, de Chernatony suggests auditing the employees' values and the "mental models of those involved in brand building activities" (p. 167). An audit should illustrate the suitability of the organisation's culture to support the brand vision, by acknowledging the gaps between desired and current cultural components. Correspondingly, this helps assessing to which extent employees align with the brand values and evaluates whether the culture components reinforce each other. As a next stage, the author considers the positioning of a brand which is intended to suit vision and core values. If it is not coherent, alternative actions may be indicated. The sense de Chernatony describes the "**brand's positioning**" resembles Kapferer's description of physique, as she states that also positioning

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reinforces through artefacts which "give stakeholder cues about the brand's performance characteristics" (p. 168). However, the author asserts that stakeholders mostly do not have the same mental model about the brand's positioning in mind. Thus, illustrating different views may help understand how they differ and what needs to be changed. Just as positioning, also the **"brand's personality"** helps stakeholders grasp what the brand can do for them. In addition, personality reduces the need for information search as it allows an easier understanding about the brand and its values. As a challenge, the brand's personality presentation outside the organisation and within the organisation, namely towards employees is highlighted. Furthermore, the coherence between the corporation's values, the planned personality and also the positioning and its implications for personality should be evaluated (pp. 168). Especially through its employees, a brand cannot be assumed to be passive when it comes to **"relationship"** building, namely staff to customers, staff to staff, staff to business partners, etc. A regular assessment of the relationship is advised as the employees should be involved how well their relationships reinforce the brand's values, personality and positioning (p. 169). Finally, the **"brand's presentation"** involves the representation of the brand's identity, most likely to appeal to stakeholder's aspired characteristics. While stakeholders have different touchpoints with the organisation, the brand's presentation needs to be aligned through communication and messaging so that i.e. staff from all departments identify with their stakeholders and "appreciate how they evaluate and select brands" (p. 169). The author further highlights the importance of the consumers to feel comfortable with the brand in all sorts of situations. In particular when expressing symbolic meaning, which support the consumer to express their selves to others. The symbolic meaning of a brand is not only created by media and advertising, but also emerges through the interaction with employees and further brand users (de Chernatony, 1999, pp. 166 – 170).

However, de Chernatony's model is based on Kapferer's identity prism but emphasises a different accent. While Kapferer's brand based view of the identity is a powerful tool to understand the essential distinctions between brands and its competition, de Chernatony's model focuses on the interlinkage between the components. Namely, the brand's vision and culture, which then drive the brand's desired positioning, personality and its subsequent relationships, and finally lead to the presentation of reflecting stakeholders' actual and aspirational self-images. Nevertheless, both researchers' models are developed to generate a better understanding of the brand's identity within the organisation. In short, the brand identity

is presenting a sense of individuality of the brand, which is company centred, while its image is a customer centred concept (de Chernatony, 1999, p. 165).

2.1.5 Brand vision, value(s) and purpose

With regards to the before mentioned, a brand's purpose goes beyond profit generation and having specific imagery in terms of packaging, logos etc. Nandan (2004) relates to the brand's core purpose as its embodied vision for the company's existence: "It presents a set of values that along with brand culture, provide direction and guidance" (p. 266). de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) suggest that defining the brand vision and values sets the base for the brand identity development, subsequently followed by considerations of brand positioning (de Chernatony, 1999; Urde, 2003, p. 1020). Similarly, also Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002) suggest that defining the brand's core values is among the first steps in the development of brand identity. The brand values are built on organisational values which "answer, in principle, the questions of what [we], as an organization stand for and what makes [us] who [we] are" (Urde, 2003, p. 1019). The organisations' value foundation impacts leadership, strategy, organisation, product development, communication etc. (Urde, 2003, p. 1020).

Nevertheless, the number of brand values should be rather limited. If a brand's purpose is defined too broadly, it may mislead employees, causing uncertain behaviour within the organisation. Hence, losing track of the core purpose, values and vision will subsequently lead to inconsistent branding (Muhonen, Hirvonen and Laukkanen, 2017, p. 8). As an example by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002), the brand identity of Virgin, a multinational corporation, also known for its founder, Sir Richard Branson, has defined four brand values, namely innovation, service quality, fun and entertainment, and value for money (p. 47). According to its values, Virgin knows how to behave and deal with internal decision makings and product development processes (Aacker and Joachimthaler, 2002, p. 47). Similarly, Boatwright et al. (2009) emphasise the role of brand values in pushing brands performance by employees delivering more congruent and consistent brand promise when following clearly defined brand values. When brand values get delivered successfully throughout all communication channels and customer touch points, companies ensure consistency and maintain authentic in the eyes of the customers (Muhonen, Hirvonen and Laukkanen, 2017, p. 14). In particular, when consumers take advantage of brands to express themselves by symbolising their personality in form of a brand, the relationship between brand and consumer will develop easier when their values are coherent (p. 34).

2.2 Brand activism

2.2.1 Evolution and definition of brand activism

The literature bears several defining terms relating brands taking a stand, namely:

- "corporate social advocacy" (Dodd and Supa, 2014),
- "corporate political advocacy" (Wettstein and Baur, 2015),
- "corporate socio-political activism" (Bhagwat et al., 2020),
- "brand activism" (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018; Kotler and Sarkar, 2020),
- and "brand political activism" (Moorman, 2020).

Most importantly, all of the authors clearly distinguish from other concepts like corporate social responsibility (CSR). Looking at the framework "Business as a Force for Good" created by Kotler and Sarkar (2020), it gives a broad understanding of how CSR, cause marketing, purpose and brand activism are classified regarding internal and external impacts of these approaches (see figure 1). According to the authors, CSR has the lowest overall impact in comparison to the others. On the contrary, brand activism is supposed to have the highest internal and external impact, stating that it "make(s) a difference in the world" (external impact) and "get(s) (the) house in order" (internal impact) (see figure 3 by Kotler and Sarkar, 2020).

Figure 3: Business as a Force for Good by Kotler and Sarkar, 2020

For decades, it has been discussed in how far corporations should take over responsibilities of their business operations affecting their stakeholders. These responsibilities cover a range of economic, social and environmental areas (Commission of the European Communities, 2002). In 1953, Howard R. Bowen's publication "The Responsibility of Businessmen" challenges questions regarding a range of moral and normative arguments up to measurement and reportable actions concerning **"corporate social responsibility"** (Kemming, 2019, p.15). Since the 1980s, a concept including the discussion about sustainability has been added which resulted in companies reporting their "triple bottom line" (Elkington, 1994) in CSR and sustainability reports. It was divided into the three pillars of social, economic and ecological responsibility, leading towards a more transparent and sustainable business. (Kemming, 2019, p. 15; Weiß 2016, p.11; Pufe, 2017, pp.112). In a broader understanding, a civic, philanthropic responsibility ("being a good corporate citizen") was increasingly identified for companies (Caroll, 1991), with the result that the corporate purpose received attention beyond its business goals.

With **"cause-related marketing"** as it is defined today, companies follow the concept "doing good by doing well", a more offensive and louder model communicating intentions to contribute to social issues (Jarolimek, 2014; Organ, 2017). Therefore, practicing cause-related marketing mostly focuses on a few activities collaborating with an external partner from charity, e.g. by donating a certain percentage of the profits (Kotler und Lee, 2004, p. 23, pp.100; Organ, 2017). Cause-related marketing is often described as a "win-win-win", as it additionally offers consumers "an opportunity to contribute for free to their favorite charities" (Kotler and Lee, 2004, p. 23).

By establishing the concept of **"brand purpose"** in the early 2000s, the aim of finding a deeper cause of existence for companies has been created. Vilá and Bharadwaj (2017) claim that defining a brand's purpose can be activated in a way that: "Brands increasingly use social purpose to guide marketing communications, inform product innovation, and steer investments toward social cause programs" (p. 97). Meaning that brands integrate reasons to exist into their business strategies by explaining "how the world is going to be a better place as a consequence of the brand" (De Chernatory 2001, S. 34). Role models for this type of campaign are, for

instance, the initiative for "Real Beauty"[3] by the cosmetic brand Dove, or "Like a girl"[4], the campaign by Procter and Gamble's brand Always, for more awareness for young girl's identity development (Kemming, 2019, p. 16). To define a brand's purpose does not only attract customers sharing similar values (Kemming, 2019, p. 16; Reichertz, 2019, p. 70) but also employees seeking for emotional bonds within the organisation's culture (De Chernatony, 2001, p. 35; Reichertz, 2019, p.77). However, the definition of brand purpose is increasingly perceived as (too) static and passive:

> "Purpose is necessary, but not sufficient (...) An increasing number of brands have been rallying around a strong sense of purpose, providing resonance and affinity with their target consumer (...) But in this highly polarized, politicized climate, purpose alone just won't cut it anymore " (Horst, 2017).

As a result, Philip Kotler, an expert in the field of modern marketing, explains (together with Christian Sarkar) **"brand activism"** as a logical confluence of CSR and cause-related marketing: "Brand activism emerges as a values-driven agenda for companies that care about the future of society and the planet's health. The underlying force for progress is a sense of justice and fairness for all" (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017). The authors define brand activism as "business efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to promote or impede improvements in society." (Kotler and Sarkar, 2020, p. 52).

Activism concerns	Areas
Social activism	*Social activism* relates to areas such as equality – gender, LGBT, race, age, etc. It also includes societal and community issues such as Education, Healthcare, Social Security, Privacy, Consumer Protection, etc.
Workplace activism	*Workplace activism* is about governance – corporate organization, CEO pay, worker compensation, labour and union relations, supply chain management, governance, etc.
Political activism	*Political activism* covers lobbying, privatization, voting, voting rights, and policy (gerrymandering, campaign finance, etc.)
Environmental activism	*Environmental activism* deals with conservation, ecocide, land-use, air and water pollution, emission control, environmental laws and policies.

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[3] „Real Beauty" campaign link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpaOjMXyJGk by Dove US, 2013

[4] „Like a Girl" campaign link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cP8g2mf2R08 by P&G Careers (Always), 2019

Economic	*Economic activism* includes wage and tax policies that impact income inequality and redistribution of wealth.
Legal activism	*Legal activism* deals with the laws and policies that impact companies.

Table 1: Activism Concerns by Kotler and Sarkar (2017)

Following this concept, companies no longer produce goods only, but also set foundations for change regarding complex socio-political concerns, which can be seen in table 1. By doing so, brand activism "involves both intangible (messaging) and tangible (practise) commitments to socio-political cause" (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 448). Further, Vredenburg et al. (2020) define these four key characteristics:

"(1) the brand is purpose- and values-driven; (2) It addresses a controversial, contested, or polarizing socio-political issue(s); (3) The issue can be progressive or conservative in nature (issues are subjective and determined by political ideology, religion, and other ideologies/beliefs); (4) and the firm contributes toward a socio-political issue(s) through messaging and brand practice" (pp. 447).

Thus, brand activism needs to be distinguished from the six areas of corporate social responsibility, defined by Lee and Kotler (2004): **"cause promotion"**, where a corporation either provides funds or other corporate resources, or supports fundraising etc. in order to increase awareness and concern for a social cause (p. 23); **"corporate social marketing"**, also called "cause marketing", encourages the development of *behaviour change* to improve public health, safety, the environment or community well-being through promotion or paid sponsorship (p. 23); **"cause-related marketing"**, the corporation mostly collaborates with a non-profit organisation over a distinct time by donating a certain percentage of their profits to them (p. 23); **"corporate philanthropy"**, includes direct cash grants to charity (p. 24) ; **"community volunteering"** encourages the workforce to volunteer in local community work (p. 24); and **"social responsible business practises"** are policies which are defined by the corporation for instance to recycle and reduce packaging (pp. 209). All of the above activities are marketing- or corporation driven. In contrast, Moorman and Vrendenburg et al. (2020, p. 446) describe brand activism as purpose- and values-driven while Kotler and Sarkar (2020), characterise it as societal-driven, having "a fundamental concern for the biggest and most urgent problems facing society" (p. 34). Korschun et al. (2019, pp. 4) and Nalick et al. (2016, pp. 11) point out the possibility that parts of society might lack the reviewed benefit as there is often not only one "correct" response to the socio-political issues which are discussed. Also, in some cases these issues may either not be seen as necessary problems to be solved (Nalick

et al., 2016, pp.11), or the way of solving them might follow different beliefs and approaches (Korschun et al., 2019, p. 5).

In the recently published article "Corporate Socio-political Activism and Brands Value", the authors Bhagwat et al. (2020) define **"corporate socio-political activism"** as "a firm's public demonstration (statements and/or actions) of support for or opposition to one side of a partisan socio-political issue" (p. 1). According to that, their definition of corporate socio-political activism also highlights the fact that it can only support one point of view in society, agreeing with Korschun et al. (2019). Likewise, **"corporate social advocacy"** (CSA), defined by Dodd and Supa in 2014, also moves beyond CSR by representing corporate engagement in controversial social or political issues that often lack direct relevance to the company (pp. 4). In 2014, Dodd and Supa identified corporate social advocacy as a connection of existing strategic issue management and corporate social responsibility (p. 5). The authors identified three ways of materialising corporate social advocacy:

> "(a) the socio-political issues addressed by organisations are divorced from issues of particular relevance to the organisation; (b) engagement in the social-political issues is controversial and serves to potentially isolate organisational stakeholders while simultaneously attracting activist groups; and, (c) as a result, there is a particularly necessary emphasis on financial outcomes for the organisation." (p. 5).

Dodd and Supa (2014) state that CSR was a corporate sponsored approach of addressing social or environmental concerns while benefiting to the organisation's image (de Bakker and den Hond, 2008; Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 445). Whereas corporations engaging in corporate social advocacy recognise that it may cause damages or even boycotts by some stakeholders (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 445; Bhagwat et al., 2020, p.1). However, corporate social advocacy can either refer to organisations making a public statement or taking a public stance on socio-political issues as a "formal output of communication" (p. 5) which was planned, or result from i.e. the "CEO making an off-the-cuff remark to a journalist" (p. 5), which shapes the perception of the public linking the statement to the CEO's organisations (Dodd and Supa, 2014). Hence, the authors emphasise that corporate social advocacy is something which is perceived by the public and does not necessarily occur as a result of a conscious decision by the corporation.

Wettstein and Baur (2016) also distinguish CSR by the fact that it more strongly emphasises the *consequences* of actions (i.e., reputation and sales), than it really pursues company values (pp. 200). In their article "Why Should We Care About Marriage Equality?":

Political Advocacy as a Part of Corporate Responsibility" published in the Journal of Business Ethics in 2016, the authors address three major challenges for managers engaging in **"corporate political advocacy"**. They define the approach "as voicing or showing explicit and public support for certain individuals, groups, or ideals and values with the aim of convincing and persuading others to do the same." (p. 200). In order to distinguish corporate political advocacy from other concepts, three specifications are illustrated: Firstly, the aim behind the corporate political involvement goes beyond the company's immediate economic interests. Secondly, based on the first insight, its ultimate result "manifests itself in the promotion and support of values and ideals" (p. 200) which are detached from the core business. Thus, whatever the corporation advocates about, does not need to stand in any relation to the business matter, but needs to follow "their own inherent and intrinsic merit" (p. 200). That is by promoting values and ideals even though it would engage in an entirely different sector. Thirdly, despite being political in nature, corporate political advocacy addressed concerns outside formal political spheres but making it visible for the larger public (Wettstein and Baur, 2016, p. 200).

The author Christine Moorman (2020) agrees with the core attribute of Bhagwat et al.'s definition of socio-political activism. In Moorman's publication "Commentary: Brand Activism in a Political World" released by the Journal of Public Policy and Marketing in 2020, the author does not put emphasis on defining the term but rather the views through the lenses of the individual stakeholders involved. Therefore, she draws meaning on **"brand political activism"** defined by Bhagwat et al. (2020) by describing the term as "public speech(es) or actions focused on partisan issues made by or on behalf of a company using its corporate or individual brand name." (pp. 388). Agreeing with Bhagwat et al. (2020), Moorman (2020) highlights the importance in brand activism in choosing one side only. Meaning that when challenging the status quo, companies cannot please all stakeholders at the same time. By advocating socio-political issues, not everyone will follow the same belief, which may upset some stakeholder groups and risk their support (p. 389).

Despite the differences, all of the abovementioned concepts call for for-profit organisations to be actively involved with the public and aim for a better future (Moorman, 2020, p. 389). They unite by having the same goal: to link business with a purpose beyond economic concerns only. Additionally, advocacy- or activism practises always lead to dispute by individuals representing a different opinion, not urging for change. Corporations which

make a stand on socio-political issues or want to change the status quo cannot please everyone. Noting that the existing body of literature in this field is rather limited (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 445), these concepts may differ in small terms but follow the same aim and share the same risk for companies to take a stand for controversial socio-political issues. It is further noticeable, that the recent publications in particular draw on each other's finding and definitions, i.e. Vredenburg et al. (2020) makes use of Kotler and Sarkar's (2018) and Moorman's (2020) definition; and Moorman draws her definition on the one defined by Bhagwat et al. (2020). According to that, the terms brand activism by Kotler and Sarkar (2020), corporate socio-political activism by Bhagwat et al. (2020), brand political activism (Moorman, 2020), corporate social advocacy by Dodd and Supa (2014) and brand political advocacy by Wettstein and Baur (2016), may be used interchangeably. In the following, brand activism and corporate activism will be used as synonyms, meaning the same approach.

2.2.2 Authentic brand activism

Academics like Kotler, Sarkar and Moorman, so as practitioners like Unilever have emphasised the importance of authenticity and the risks of brands not "walking the talk" with 56 percent of consumers claiming that too many brands now use societal issues mainly for marketing reasons in order to raise sales (Edelman, 2019). Reichertz claims that all brands follow a similar strategy by hiring advertising agencies to promote norms and values in external communication which supposed to represent the brand's beliefs as part of its identity (Reichertz, 2019, p. 71). Regarding to Vredenburg's et al. (2020) findings, this would call for inauthentic brand activism behaviour. Following their ideology, a firm acts inauthentic when its messaging concerning socio political issues does not align with the brand's purpose, their values, and/or their corporate practice (p. 445).

The researchers further circumscribe inauthenticity and woke washing and/or decoupling: Where decoupling or woke washing is simply not aligning prosocial corporate practice with its messaging, inauthentic brand activism follows only one, either prosocial corporate practise or messaging. Thus, decoupling or woke washing might take place when brands do not specifically define "intermediate records of social cause practices" (Vredenburg et al, 2018 by Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 445), but are trying "to market themselves as being concerned with issues of inequality and social injustice" (Sobande, 2019, p. 18). By doing so, Vredenburg et al. (2020) point out that these brands could potentially do both, mislead consumers, and imperial attempts at driving social change (p. 445). Consequently, aligning practises and messaging is necessary indeed but not sufficient enough to "grow and maintain

authentic brand activism" (p. 449). To become a truly authentic corporate activist the actions must also demonstrate "symmetry and match between their purpose, values, messaging, and practice" (p. 449). This is further illustrated in the "typology of brand activism" created by Vredenburg et al. (2020, p. 449) (figure 4). Where the horizontal axis illustrates the low to high level of activist marketing messaging, the vertical axis represents the low to high level of prosocial corporate practise. According to the typology, reaching a high level in both, prosocial-messaging and practices, brand activism operations can be understood as authentic.

Prosocial corporate practice

High

Q2 "Silent Brand Activism"

Low activist marketing messaging
High engagement in prosocial corporate practice
Explicit prosocial brand purpose and values
Potential authentic brand activism

Q3 "Authentic Brand Activism"

High activist marketing messaging
High engagement in prosocial corporate practice
Explicit prosocial brand purpose and values
Framing and driving solutions to problems of public interest

Activist marketing messaging

Low   *High*

Q1 "Absence of Brand Activism"

Low activist marketing messaging
Low engagement in prosocial corporate practice
Lack of explicit prosocial brand purpose and values
Authentic brand activism opportunity

Q4 "Inauthentic Brand Activism"

High activist marketing messaging
Low engagement in prosocial corporate practice
Lack of explicit prosocial brand purpose and values
Deceptive or opportunistic decoupling (woke washing)

Low

Figure 4: Typology of brand activism by Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 449

As mentioned earlier and in order to examine brand activism, the authors established four key characteristics:

"1. The brand is purpose- and values-driven; 2. It addresses a controversial, contested, or polarizing socio political issue(s); 3. The issue can be progressive or conservative in nature (issues are subjective and determined by political ideology, religion, and other ideologies/beliefs); and 4. The firm contributes toward a socio political issue(s) through messaging and brand practice." (Vredenburg et al., 2020, pp. 446).

To go into more detail: Firstly, a brand's purpose (including defined values) aims to deliver broader public (e.g. social and environmental) benefits beyond immediate economic concerns for the corporation (Wettstein and Baur, 2016, p. 200). While making use of their public power, Moorman (2020) states, that brands can take over political missions which they embed in their purpose (p. 389). Therefore, "products and services are viewed as tools for creating change in the world" (p. 391). The author further differentiates between companies being born with this mission, like Patagonia, and some which are evolving into this position, e.g. Unilever (p. 391). Especially when companies were founded to create social change, these

are greatly influenced by the beliefs of their leaders, e.g. Yvon Chouinard, the founder and owner of Patagonia. He started his company by producing rock climbing equipment, following his passion and therefore particularly taking care that the products he offers do not harm the environment (starting with chocks which did not damage the rocks) (Chouinard, 2016, introduction). Patagonia continued to use its business to inspire and implement beneficial solutions for the ecosystem by cresting its belief by supporting only environmental friendly candidates in the US elections, i.e. with its "Vote Our Planet" program (Moorman, 2020, p. 391).

Secondly, brand activism deals with controversial, contested and polarising socio-political issues which are politically sensitive and arouse strong emotions, not necessary aligning with the majority's opinions and beliefs (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 448; Moorman, 2020, p. 389; Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 2).

Thirdly, brand activism can be defined by progressive or conservative approaches, depending on the political ideology or religion (Vredenburg et al, 2020). Even though most companies characterise their brand activism along progressive thinking, there are few promoting conservative lines (e.g. taking a stance against homosexual marriage) (Manfredi-Sanchesz, 2019, p. 354).

The forth characterisation of brand activism puts emphasis on the involvement of both, intangible (messaging) and tangible (practise) responsibilities to socio-political controversies. Tangible commitments for instance, support employees through organisational policies and modifications to corporate practice, or other stakeholders for example through partnerships or monetary donations aimed to facilitate socio-political causes. Whereas, the intangible commitment takes place by communicating (messaging) about the same (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 448; Wettstein and Baur, 2016, p. 211). However, Vredenburg et al. (2020) further point out that these prosocial corporate practices may vary significantly regarding on how enrooted and developed they are in the business (p. 448). This again puts emphasis on the before mentioned: for leading brand activism companies, like Patagonia or Ben & Jerry's, brand activism "is not a marketing ploy, it is a business strategy" (Kotler by Kotler and Sarkar, 2018). Also, as an example, Vredenburg et al. (2020) claim that one-off donations to the LGBTQ community most likely have fewer impact than to allow parental leave for same-sex couples or the adaption of a gender-neutral bathroom policy. With regards to the authors, "long-term and embedded commitments may thus yield greater social impact" (p. 448). Additionally, Wettstein and Baur (2016) emphasise the same thought but defining it through a brands consistency with foundational company values in public advocacy campaigning (p. 211). According to them,

managers must evaluate whether such advocacy is compatible to the "values which guard the integrity of the company". (p. 211). In order "to become really clear about what your values are and also about what it means to live by them (..) a company is not going anywhere without this necessary map." (Hollender, 20114, p. 118). Also, Waddock and Rasche (2012) state that "companies that wish to operate with integrity must articulate positive and constructive values to guide their behavior.'' (p. 83).

In the recently released article by Sinai, Mimoun and Boukis (2021), a brands activism authenticity is stated to be rather based on a "competency-oriented view" pursuing a more "heterogeneous and multidimensional phenomenon" which expends a range of "moral territories" with which the brand can engage. The authors conceptualise a practice named "free speech boundary work" which is "negotiating whether social norms defining which opinions and ideas are acceptable to express publicly, should be created, tightened, maintained, loosened, or suppressed" (p. 3). Also, according to David Farinella who highlights the "tremendous opportunity (corporations have), to bring people together and build a better world." (Fainella, 2021). Agreeing with previously mentioned, Sinai, Mimoun and Boukis correspondingly state that activist brands either act inauthentic or peruse woke washing and their operations potentially result in reputation damage and/or negative financial outcome, or they successfully negotiate free speech boundaries by confirming with brand audiences (p. 4). In contrast to others, these authors underline the fact that even through woke washing or similar manipulating branding purposes, important concerns get heard by the public and might correspondingly contribute to positive social change (p. 35). However, in addition to previous literature, the authors belay the sensation of brands being a "true activist" on behalf of their stakeholders' moral judgement (p. 5).

> "Consumers are very savvy these days. They really can see through things that are not authentic, and that's where brands tend to get into trouble: when they don't have the right insight. They have not done the roll-up-the-sleeve work in the community before they start to go big and broad." says Eric Austin, senior director of global brand building and media innovation at Proctor and Gamble (Kelly, 2021).

The results of Sinai, Mimoun and Boukis illustrate that true brand activism is depending on the ability of the brand to communicate their moral capacity defined in terms of moral sensitivity, moral vision, and moral integration. All of those moral capacities can be interlinked with other researchers' findings. Having said that a brand's values need to be embedded in its strategy in order to operate and behave with integrity, its moral capacity relies on it also. Therefore, the authors describe three scenarios of failure on moral sensitivity, moral integration

and moral vision: (1) a lack of moral sensitivity occurs when brands imitate other brands' images which leads to transgression of free speech boundaries; (2) firms follow a weak moral integration when they use green or woke washing; (3) an organisations' vision is morally limited when it acts as fellow-runner, only producing goods or providing services in order to serve what is demanded on the market (p.37). All of the above are scenarios in which the values of the company lack in being clearly defined. Thus, taking the typology of brand activism by Vredenburg et al. (figure 4) into account, the above mentioned scenarios result in inauthentic brand activism. By imitating another brand's image, pursue in woke washing or operating of what is trending, companies clearly promote something they either do not practise or their actions do not follow a fundamentally defined business purpose which is guided by deep socio-political values and beliefs integrated within the organisation.

Acknowledging that not every company is built on previously defined socio-political values, the creative strategist Farinalla (2021) defines four steps for brands to become an authentic brand activist: As a first step, to ascertain internal beliefs the brand should conduct their employees' opinions anonymously. Afterwards, they should synthesise the responses into a core belief statement which can be passed around for further feedback and the aim of sharing different ways of perspective. By "building consensus" its suppose to "boost morale and foster connection". In step three, the brand should start creating an action plan about how the company can engage with the chosen socio-political topic, based on the core belief statement. In the final step, Farinalla suggests to "communicate, update and remain flexible by continuously keeping the employees informed and engaged". He emphasises that it needs time to effectively involve in social change. This is further highlighted by Wettsein and Baur (2015) saying that "trust in corporate intent and faith in corporate promises can build only over time and only if a company lives and promotes its values authentically and consistently. " (p. 211). Additionally, Sethi and Williams (2000) indicate that "the right to advocate cannot be taken for granted but must be earned through public trust in corporate intent and faith in corporate promises made in the name of public interest" (p. 197). According to Wiley (2020), brands which commit to real and lasting support of socio-political issues do not need public relations approved content, but merely initiatives which specifically show what they are doing to walk their talk.

In an interview with the ethical campaign specialist of Lush Cosmetics NA, Carleen Pickard, the interviewer Kelly (2021) points out that brand activism campaigns require a few months up to three years to run through idea to execution. As a benchmark, the first step might

be to meet with non-profit organisations to see whether partnering would be an option. "It's not ever our place to decide what the message is, or to say that we know any better than those organizations doing the work," Carleen Pickard says. As an example, Lush developed a brand activism campaign regarding trans rights by changing internal operations to become more trans inclusive and a safer employer before promoting their approach. In order to communicate their campaign, they firstly partnered with the "National Center for Transgender Equality" (NCTE) and secondly, include their trans- and non-binary staff who voluntary participated in the campaign video. "It only works when all of the company is behind the issue that we're talking about," Pickard acknowledges (Kelly, 2021). To assist this, also in the case of Black Lives Matter, Pepper Miller, a US-American diversity consultant argues that many corporations took part of the movement's hashtag etc. but do not operate accordingly, meaning that "as of 2020, only four of America's 500 biggest companies had a black chief executive" (Miller by Duarte, 2020). In alignment to the before mentioned, the diversity consultant refers to long-term plans for social inclusion and racial equality that go beyond saying that "they stand with black people". He further mentions that it, according to his experience, most initiatives were "one-offs" (Duarte, 2020).

On the contrary, more and more brands get pushed by the public to take a stand when events like the Black Lives Matter movement occur (Sibai, Mimoun and Boukis, 2021, p. 37; Horst, 2017). "Silence on social issues could be the kiss of death for brands, especially (if you look at) the way that young customers are engaging with them right now." Aaron Shernian, CMO and communications officer at the United Nations Foundation says (Wiley, 2020). Not publically expressing their opinion, or supporting one's side will often be misunderstood. Questions like "Why weren't you being accountable?" etc. might be asked when brands stay silent. Furthermore, the public often demands real engagement from corporations to overcome the consumer's scepticism (Wiley, 2020).

2.2.3 The role of social media

Today, companies interact with a range of stakeholders through social media, including current and potential employees, current and potential customers, journalists, influencers, cooperation partners and the general public (Shamsudeen Ibrahim and Ganeshbabu, 2018, p. 120). Through digital platforms conversations take place two-sided instead of one-sided only. This changes the communication between brands and its consumers in particular (Yoo et al., 2021, p. 67). Where companies used to advertise or communicate in a monologue, nowadays they interact in a dialogue. Consumers have become participants and are

no further only seen as the brand's audience. As participants they share their ideas directly and express their opinions regardless of them being an influencer, a person of the public or an "ordinary" person. By becoming interactive with consumers, brands motivate consumers to get further involved in discussions etc. Therefore, as the authors suggest, it is "reasonable to take an activist approach to move the brand's philosophy into action and encourage consumer participation" (Yoo et al., 2021, p. 67).

According to a survey asking marketing managers worldwide, the most important social-media-platforms for corporations in May 2021 were (1) Facebook with 54 percent, (2) Instagram with 22 percent, (3) LinkedIn with 15 percent, followed by YouTube (6 percent) and Twitter (2 percent) (Statista, 2021). Facebook is a social network where users create their own profile. In their name they can create posts, or comment and like other's posted content (Fuentes Rodrigues and Brenes Pena, 2021, p. 248). Instagram is a highly visual social media platform. It is mostly used to share photographs and videos, which can be accompanied with short texts or hashtags specifying their theme. This helps users to find visuals posted with the same or similar matter shared by others. LinkedIn however has a more professional than private approach. It "is the world's largest professional network on the internet" (LinkedIn, 2020). It is used to find jobs, strengthen professional relationships, but also organise online/offline events, join groups write and share articles, post photos, videos and much more (LinkedIn, 2020). The microblogging service Twitter can also be accompanied by hashtags and photographs but mainly provides short text message posts (limited to 280 characters), known as tweets (Fuentes Rodrigues and Brenes Pena, 2021, p. 249). The least important platform when considering the 2021 survey of Statista was YouTube, which is the world's second biggest search engine after google. It is an online platform to provide and share videos publically and can be further shared on other social media platforms, emails or websites (Queensland Government, 2020).

Mutinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) describe a transformation in online consumer behaviour which is provided by the engagement opportunities between the brand and its consumers (p. 13). All external brand strategies are being influenced by the consumers' online brand related activities. The engagement responses of the consumers can interpret the success and impact level of the brand's activism efforts. To go further into detail, consumer engagement can refer to "interactive brand related dynamics (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) (...) which reflects a consumer's level of interest in, and personal relevance of a brand" (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 2). Mutinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) classify consumer's online-brand related

social media activities into three categories: consuming, contributing and creating. Where consuming refers to a merely passive engagement, like viewing, listening, reading, playing, downloading, etc., contributing considers interaction, consisting of "user-to-user and user-to-content" activities. The highest level of engagement is being reached by creating. Therefore, individuals actively produce and publish "brand-related content that others consume and contribute to" (p. 16). As already mentioned with regards to Yoo et al., Mutinga, Moorman and Smit also point out how consumers are being motivated to create that brand-related content. The authors identify the consumers' inspiration to contribute to brand-related content by three distinct motivations: First, their personal identity, which is additionally encouraged by the satisfaction of one's self, meaning reinforcing personal values and identifying with and gaining recognition from peers. For instance, people like to identify their selves with brands in order to give others an impression about their personality. Second, their integration and social interaction, which is also referred to social identity and collective helping, make brand enthusiasts feel motivated to contribute to brand-related content in order to meet like-minded others and interact and talk with them about that brand. These interactions might be an exchange of opinions on their favourite Ben & Jerry's ice cream flavour, etc. Finally, as third motivation driven by entertainment, also picks up the point that people like to exchange their opinions or experiences of the brand. The results of Mutinga, Moorman and Smit study conduct a citation of a young mother who explains: "I like sharing those experiences. It's always fun to talk to other mothers about baby products and give each other tips and tricks and all." (cited by Mutinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011, pp. 30).

Having explained the major motivational factors for people in general contributing to brand-related content creation, it can be assumed that the motivation will be even higher if the brand is known for its socio-political activism activities. Actually, Li, Kim and Alharbi (2021) state that the more important, meaningful and/or positive related consumers perceive promoted socio-political issues, the more likely they are to show support for such campaigns or companies (p. 17). However, one has to keep in mind that reactions can be both, positive and negative. As an example, in 2018 Nike launched their 30th annual "Just Do It" campaign with the American National Football League player Colin Kaepernick who refused to sing the national anthem and instead kneeled down to silently protest against the US police brutality against black people. Nike portrait Kaepernick with a phrase saying: "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing anything." and the well-known Nike swoosh with the "Just do it." slogan. (Bhagwat et al., Li, Kim and Alharbi, 2021, pp. 1; Yoo et al., 2021, p. 67). The public's reaction was

diverse, with a lot of people boycotting the campaign online, using hashtags like #nikeboycott and #boycottnike. As the campaign went viral online, another part of the public reproduced their own version of the ad to point out other socio-political issues. As an example, a consumer-generated ad "hinted at child labour practices by corporations" (Yoo et al., 2021, p. 67). According to the authors, the internet memes tailored to the Nike advertisement even featured Osama Bin Laden, Hitler and Jesus Christ. As a result, by publishing controversial content, brands have to acknowledge and accept diverse reactions (p. 67). Each campaign includes managing the social media around it, setting a scope (e.g. more passive or active use) and establish desired appearance and tone (Shamsudeen Ibrahim and Ganeshbabu, 2018, p. 120).

Christensen (2011), who studied the effectiveness of internet activism on affecting real-life political decisions, challenges the support via internet. According to a big part of her studied literature, researchers use the term slacktivism to describe critical online activism as it is said to "have no impact on real-life political outcomes, but only serve to increase that feel-good factor of the participants" (Morozov, 2009 by Christensen, 2011, p. 2). However, the author emphasises that slacktivism does not only relate to a rather passive online activism but can also take expressions, "such as wearing political messages in various forms on your body or vehicle, joining Facebook groups, or taking part in short-term boycotts such as Buy Nothing Day or Earth Day." (p. 3). Further, slacktivism is seen as low effort activities that are considered ineffective in contributing to political change when comparing it to traditional forms of participation (p. 4). As another example the author indicates to changing your profile picture on your social media account for a day, a week, or a month. He further states that those people are "unwilling to get their hands dirty and do the efforts required to actually achieve these goals." (p. 4). The action of joining a particular Facebook group is seen to signal preferences to the user's social media crowd rather than achieving real-life political results (p. 5). Therefore, Christensen's literature studies lead to two major critiques: "(1) Internet activities are not effective; and, (2) Internet activities do not engage in other activities." (p. 5), the online activities replace traditional offline participation thereby leading to lower overall levels of participation." (p. 2). According to Christensen, there is a decent amount of literature from the early 2000s which initiates that internet activism lead to less offline participation. Whereas literature around 2010 mainly states that internet activism may help mobilising the young into offline forms of political participation so as increasing awareness of contemporary issues (Christensen, 2011, pp. 6). However, the author further points out that online activism can indeed lead to social-political change. For example, by using online petition websites, which

create an easier access and therefore reaches a larger audience to become active without making a large effort (p. 6). Furthermore, by an example of Greta Thunberg it can be demonstrated how offline activism creates a buzz online and consequently encourages people to become actively involved outside the online world as well, i.e. it can be seen at the high number of participants for the global "Fridays for Future" movement initiated by Greta Thunberg (McGregor, 2020). Moreover, both authors, Christensen and McGregor, emphasise the fact that online activism increases awareness about certain topics. McGregor (2020) however highlights the fact that online activism during the Covid-19 pandemic plays a major role in specific. Especially younger generations educate theirselves over the internet, which makes direct knowledge sharing form experts to public possible. So called webinars provide global access to learn about topics like the climate crisis. "The Internet unifies us all, and that's how (Fridays for Future) digital came into its own. We managed to reach a lot of people who were concerned about the climate crisis but didn't know how to take action." Joel Lev-Tov, a member of the media team at Fridays for Future Digital says (McGregor, 2020).

2.2.4 The stakeholder's interest

"Stakeholders are pushing companies to wade into sensitive social and political issues — especially as they see governments failing to do so effectively."— Larry Fink, BlackRock chief executive officer (2019).

To identify stakeholders Freeman and Reed presented the following definition in 1983: "Any identifiable group or individual who can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives." Hence, stakeholders include public interest groups, the government, trade associations, competitors, as well as employees, customers, investors, shareholders, and many more, individually depending on the operative business (Freemen and Reed, 1983).

Employees nowadays wish for a workplace where their personal values align with the brand's purpose. Younger employees in particular, namely millennials, want their jobs to have meaning (Moorman, 2020, p. 391; Vredenburg, 2020, p. 448). Current, so as prospective employees do not only pay attention on salary, but increasingly care about factors like the companies' public opinion and the brand's overall reputation, so as its goals and values (Reichertz, 2019, p.77). By being involved in activities which are important to the world, the entire organisational culture becomes more animated and inspired correspondingly (Moorman, 2020, p. 391; Reichertz, 2019, p. 77). Regardless from daily motivation, especially aligning

values are attracting employees to apply for a position in a company. Furthermore, employee sentiment positively influences the company's stock returns and innovation processes (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 5). The stronger the bond between the employer and their workers, the higher is the commitment and productivity (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 5; Kotler and Sarkar, 2019). Moreover, frontline employees play a significant role in representing the brand's espoused brand personality (Sirianni et al., 2013, pp. 119). According to the Edelman Trust Barometer (2020), 64 percent believe that a company can take actions which increase profits *and* improve economic and social conditions in the community in which it operates. In fact, **CEOs** are expected to lead the fight for change: Employees expect "prospective employers" to actively join them in advocating for socio-political issues (67 percent) (Barton et al. 2018; Edelman, 2018; Kotler and Sarkar, 2020, p. 12). More than three-quarters (76 percent) agree that they want CEOs to take the lead on change instead of waiting for government to impose it (Kotler and Sarkar, 2020, p. 12).

As mentioned before, there is a trend guided by **customers/consumers** preferring to buy from companies if they follow a deeper cause of existence or business purpose (Shetty et al., 2019, p. 163; Kotler and Sarkar, 2019; Chernev und Blair, 2015, p. 1414) and/or expect them to engage in socio-political discussions (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019 cited by Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 445). Globalisation has expanded markets and increased competition over the internet. In order to distinguish from competing brands there is a need to shape a stronger identity which is no longer only based on physical features and visible elements like designs, logos etc., but also on beliefs, values or political views (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019, p. 345 f.; Shetty et al., 2019, p.165). A recent study by Edelman (2018) found that 64 percent of global consumers buy or boycott a brand based on its positioning regarding societal issues. This means an increase of 13 percent year over year (Edelman, 2018, p. 1). Moreover, more than half of the consumers being surveyed by Piplsay[5] in 2021 claim that brand activism influences their purchasing behaviour (Kelly, 2021). Also Manfredi-Sanchez (2019) highlights the emotional connection between corporations and consumers, which can be created by brands embracing activist causes, for instance by challenging existing systems (p. 345). Companies which practice socio-political activism provide their customers with the potential to consume without neglecting their inner values, beliefs or socio political opinions (Hollers, 2020). The corporate

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[5] "Piplsay" is an American, UK and India based company under the lead of "Market Cube", which is a global full-service research operations company delivering more than 14 million survey completes annually. For more Information: https://piplsay.com/about-us/

role of a brand is no longer an economic or psychologic duty but merely a cultural responsibility for the whole community (Kemming, 2019, p. 141). Consumers decide for or against a brand, looking at its promoted fundamental values which could be building social affiliation for them (p. 140). For many of them, brands issuing statements, sharing hashtags or promoting one-time donations is no longer enough. They want them to become more authentic, going beyond token public statements but rather support their values actively. This can only be done by true- and long-lasting commitments to the socio-political actions they praise (Wiley, 2020). Moreover, highly convinced consumers may help shaping and developing the brand community (Kemming, 2019, p. 140). According to the study by Piplsay, when a brand activism strategy is well developed, about a third of consumers believe that it can help leading to "real change" (Kelly, 2021).

Investors/shareholders on the other hand, socio-political activism can be evaluated as a signal for a company's allocation of resources, away from profit-oriented objectives. When participating in corporate social advocacy or brand activism, a company's values and beliefs may appeal to some consumers who agree with its action or statement but will unavoidably offend others. Therefore, it is seen as risky and may cause uncertain financial outcomes (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 1). As a consequence, publically taking a position in controversial socio-political debates is a rather risky approach especially in terms of financial security (Kotler and Sarkar 2017). Investors may also question if the time, resources and attention which is put into corporate activism strategies and campaigns could be rather used to push business operation, innovation or other profit-generating activities (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 4). On the other hand, Wettsein and Baur (2015) emphasise that no company would engage in socio-political debates and advocate certain values and beliefs if it does not expect it to be beneficial for the firm's bottom line (p. 209). Notably, investors responses regarding corporate socio-political activism mostly depend on key stakeholders' opinion, namely the customers. So, if there occurs a trend shift to more and more customers basing their purchase intentions on personal values and beliefs, corporations and therefore investors need to trust it, too. As a supporting example, the Colin Kaepernick campaign by Nike resulted in an overall sales increase by 31 percent within the first three days (Pengelly, 2018). However, soon the attention shifted to Nike's diversity within the organisation. Public records from 2019 illustrated that less than 10 percent of the corporations approximately 300 vice-presidents worldwide were black. As a consequence, Nike CEO John Donahue stated: "During this past year, we've stepped up our own efforts and measures of accountability in the areas of diversity, inclusion and belonging

to foster an inclusive environment and attract a more diverse workforce" (Duarte, 2020). Therefore, Nike begun to financially support "black communities in the US", taking the happenings as a learning Duarte, 2020).

Following up on the matter of anti-racism, another interest group can be formed, namely who are affected by (in this case) racism, often described as the *minority group*. As an example, Sharon Chuter, a Nigerian-born former executive in the beauty industry and founder of the brand Uoma, created the campaign "Pull Up or Shut Up". With her initiative, she challenges brands to reveal the number of black people working for them at an executive level and encouraging the public to refuse purchasing from businesses which do not align advocacy communication and their organisational actions. Accordingly, the hastag #PullUporShutUp has been embraced by influencers such as Youtube star Jackie Aina, who called on her followers to only buy from brands which align their organisational actions with what they are praising regarding supporting the black community (Duarte, 2020).

Furthermore, individual *activists* have an interest in businesses advocating socio-political change in order to support their cause. However, Nupol Kiazolou, a 19-year-old activist from the Black Lives Matter movement in New York City claims that "we also want to these businesses pushing elected officials to adopt policies that will result in real change, not giving money to those politicians who are not helping us despite being elected to represent the people." (Kiazolou by Duarte, 2020).

Finally, when participating in a purposeful business, it may also motivate *suppliers* by taking extra effort of delivering on time, with better quality etc. or other *business partners* to cooperate with one another. Vredenburg et al. published an article where they mention days are gone where B2B companies will no further be observed, even when direct customer contact is missing. Managers or buyers are increasingly challenged to base their corporate decision-making not only on costs, but also on social or emotional considerations. Vredenburg et al. (2020b) claim that there is a trend for companies taking care of their business partner's commercial ethics and activities. As an example, New Zealand's digital media group "Stuff" stopped using Facebook as an advertising partner due to "fake news, hate speech and fraudulent advertising" on the social media platform, as the trial response explains. The authors call out tangible impacts of "B2B activism": "removing products from shelves, terminating licensing contracts, removing content from online platforms and firing clients and supply-chain partners

that don't align with a corporate brand's avowed values and purpose." (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Theses reactions might happen without the public's awareness, but will most likely be undertaken as a response of potential unwanted perception. As the end-consumer's expectations extend to socio-political causes, a rise of "pro-social supply chains" considering those causes is key for sustaining a business successfully in the long run. However, the authors further point out a difference between i.e. retailers "simply refusing to stock products because they are offensive or defective" and "refusing to stock products because of something a supplier has said or done", which is referred to "cancel culture". According to Vredenburg et al. (2020b), B2B brand activism in the supply chain can impact suppliers with a loss of contracts, revenue and livelihood when getting "cancelled" by clients further down the supply chain. By referring to their journal article (discussed in chapter 2.2.2) the authors highlight the role of authenticity in B2B brand activism also. Saying that marketing and communications must align with purpose and indisputable action, in order to not be accused of woke washing. In short, the consumers' demand for purpose and action asks for more transparency, including workspace safety, employee rights, paying fair wages and sustainability, which in turn calls for brand activism infiltrating the entire supply chain (Vredenburg et al., 2020b).

2.2.5 Managing brand activism

In the working paper "Brand activism as a marketing strategy: proposing a typology" (2021), the Brazilian researchers Pedro Pimentel and Simone Didonet combine existing literature on brand activism with illustrative examples to create a marketing framework. Thereby, from all the before mentioned literature, they bring in to the field of brand activism the organisation's perspective instead of the consumer's point of view (pp. 1-2). Looking at brand activism from an internal perspective, it was often confused with concepts like communication strategy, product strategy, or positioning strategy (Pimentel and Didonet, 2021, p. 2). When following marketing trends, changes in social norms and thus consumer's expectations should never be neglected. That is why concepts like the triple bottom line etc. were introduced. However, the recent evolution asks firms to take activist stances for issues which are not necessarily connected to their core business, or at least do not have a direct connection to it (p. 3). However, Pimentel and Didonet claim that brand activism should be incorporated in the marketing field as they emphasise with Carrol's 1979 statement: "Through firms are mindful of diverse objectives, they still are economic institutions by nature." (p. 3). Meaning that the authors believe that brand activism's main assumption is still of economic nature, trying to increase firm's performance and rather supplement to societal change. However, the authors see the high potential in combining those two elements and form a

theoretical framework to guide companies in executing in brand activism. Hence, the model will be explored now.
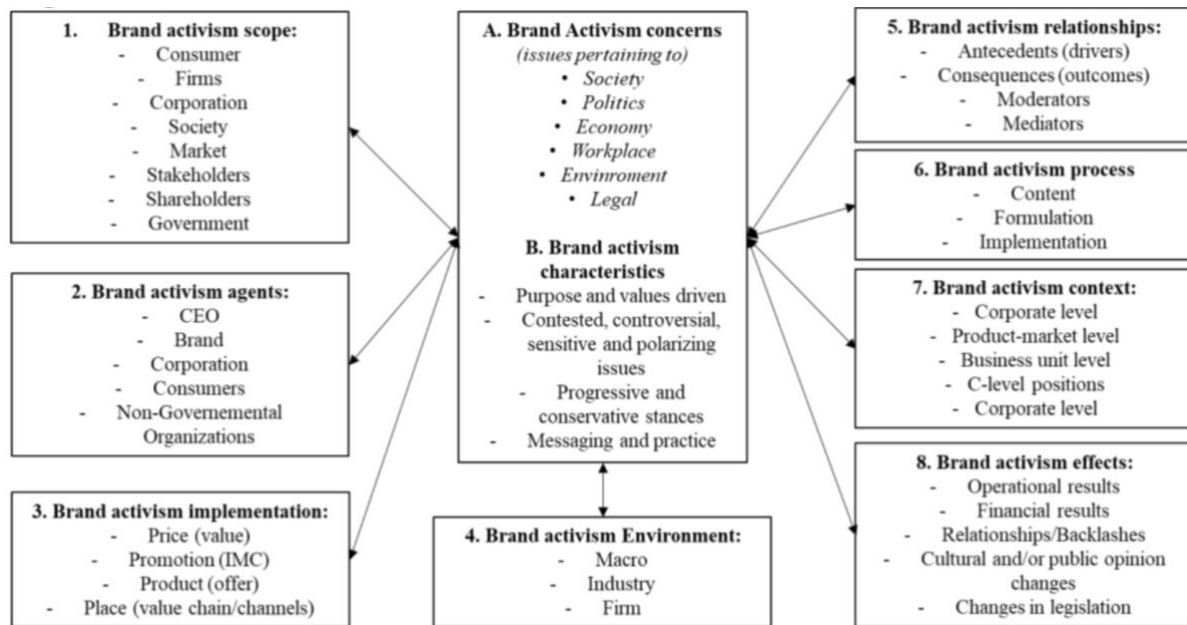
Figure 5: *Theoretical Framework of Brand Activism, Pimentel and Didonet, 2021, p. 3*

To start with the box in the centre of the framework, which is also connected to all other eight boxes, it includes the six areas of concern (defined by Kotler and Sarkar, see chapter 2.2.1) and the brand activism characteristics, which were adjusted from Vredenburg et al. (2020, pp. 446) (also, see chapter 2.2.1). The six issues pertaining to society, politics, economy, workplace, environment and legal brand activism concerns. Those were first assembled by Kotler and Sarkar but have its origin in the corporate social responsibility categories. However, Pimentel and Didonet highlight that brand activists have a broader set of concerns, which may vary over time and from organisation to organisation (p. 4). To go into detail, brands may advocate in favour or against issues within one of the six dimensions, such as "sexual harassment, racism, public health, LGBTQIA+ rights, reproductive rights, gun control, immigration, abortion, child labor, deforestation, etc." (p. 4). Thus, companies can adopt any concern, or focus on a specific one, but should align it to its purpose statement and values. This and the following three steps (see box part B) have been firstly defined by Vredenburg et al. (2020, p. 447) and are discussed in chapter 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 as well. Further, their brand activism issues can be of contested, controversial, sensitive or polarising nature, while they take a progressive or conservative stance. When the characteristics are defined they lead the companies' messaging and practises with a purpose- and value-driven approach.

The eight boxes which are all liked with both sided arrows to the just mentioned central box include the following: 1) brand activism scope; 2) brand activism agents; 3) brand activism implementation; 4) brand activism environment; 5) brand activism relationship; 6) brand activism process; 7) brand activism context; and 8) brand activism effects.

The scope of brand activism (box one) includes stakeholder groups like consumers, society, government, other firms and many more, depending on each organisation's operational touch points (see chapter 2.2.4). However, according to the authors the scope refers to "the impact aimed at a determined audience and consists of the target for such practice" (p. 4). As an example they name Walmart's decision to increase wages, which was delighting their employees but at the same time made their shares drop by 5.6 percent (p. 4). Therefore, brand activism does not always please all stakeholder groups, or not necessarily at the same time.

The second box defines brand activism agents which can be the CEO, the brand itself, the corporation, consumers or non-governmental organisations. Those are considered to be the actual actorness (agents) as all of them could "prompt reactions and impact the brand" (p. 4).

Even though activism and advocacy has some similarities, Pimentel and Didonet differentiate both concepts. Stating that "any marketing mix decision can uphold brand activism", brand advocacy can only exist under the activism domain, when taking public stances (p. 5). The third box, called brand activism implementations, consists of the marketing mix, namely price (value), promotion, product and place. To illustrate, brand activism involves in tangible and intangible commitments which means it takes more than only communicating about socio-political issues, but also taking action to push for change actively. Through the use of the marketing mix the brand activism implementation is seen as, "the process of creating the value (product/price), communicating the value (promotion), and delivering the value (channels)" (El-Ansary, 2006, p. 270). The authors claim that whenever brand activism is being practised it has the potential to increase or decrease the value of the offering.

As a forth box, there are three influencing factors of an organisation's brand activism defined, namely its macro environment, its industry environment, and the company's environment itself. These factors will in turn guide decisions, actions and outcomes of the brand activism of a company. The macro environment includes the institutions and macro societal factors that shape the company's behaviour. The industry environment consists of all actors in which the company operates, namely suppliers, customers, competitors, partners, etc. and can pursuit competitive advantage. The company's environment comprises internal elements affecting strategic decisions of how to behave when responding and overcoming constraints and taking advantage of opportunities. Hence, the organisation's environment includes also

"culture, skills, resources, capabilities, collective beliefs, etc." (p. 6). Therefore, following this understanding, brand activism strategies premise both, being influenced *and* influencing the environments in which the company is embedded. In such circumstances, consumers (Bhagwat et al., 2020), employees (Weinzimmer et al., 2016 cited by Pimentel and Didonet , 2021, p. 6), or business partners (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019) may put pressure on the company to take a position and act towards a solution of sensitive issues.

The relationships of brand activists (box 5) consist of so called antecedents (drivers), consequences (outcome), moderators and mediations, but are no further explained by the authors.

The process (box six) however, will be the most important part for this research thesis. The brand activism content is capturing its purpose on the basis of "the choice of issue, relationships, offerings, timing, and pattern of resources that are deployed for competitive advantage" (p. 6). Hence, the content is based on the central box including, the concerns (issues) and the characteristic of the action. The formulation is described as an "interactive and iterative process", including the market analysis, decision-making styles, consumer behaviour understanding, market segmentation and so on. Its aim is to determine the brand activism content. The third part of the process in brand activism is defined by the implementation (also box three) which can be understood as the actions taken by the company to execute the strategy.

Furthermore, brand activism context (box seven) puts emphasis on the different levels brand activism can interact with, namely, corporate level, product-market level, business unit level and C-level positions. This implies that whenever the CEO is posting a socio-political statement on his/her social media it may legitimately affect his/her company also.

Finally, brand activism effects, highlighted in the eighth box, comprises of operational results, financial results, relationships and backlashes, cultural and/or public opinion changes and changes in legislation. Those performance outcomes however, are very hard to measure and making the link towards brand activism practises is merely impossible. Despite that, previous research has shown potentially positive outcome of brand activism on a firm's performance, as the customers' buying intentions were said to increase (p. 7). Nonetheless, negative outcomes should not be underestimated as boycotts may evoke, especially when involving in controversial activism practises. On that behalf, companies should be aware of "changes on legislation and policymaking, impacts on social inequality and injustice, improvement of social welfare and the environment and cultural and/or public opinion changes" in order to react adequately.

Thus, Pimentel and Didonet suggest that brand activism should be an organisation-driven approach, as it may cause changes on the brand image and equity. Also, they recommend before using brand activism as a marketing strategy, it should be carefully planned and implemented to avoid critical voices or even boycotts. Furthermore, they emphasise the importance of consistency and authenticity between the advocated issues and the brands values and purpose.

3 Methodology

This chapter is dedicated to the methodological approach of this research in order to outline how the objectives of the study are reached. Firstly, a presentation of the research philosophy, the research approach and the research design will be provided. The subsequent section will introduce the data collection and the data analysis. Lastly, the methodology chapter is rounded off by reflecting on validity and ethical considerations of this study.

3.1 Research question and propositions

This research investigates the internal processes of organisations taking a stand on socio-political issues. As previously stated, the research question is:

How do companies organise themselves around the process of making a stand on socio-political issues?

Grounded on this main question, additional propositions have been formulated while researching in order to support the consistent line of reasoning:

- RP 1: *The socio-political concerns the organisation's address are based on the brand's values.*
- RP 2: *Companies follow an action plan when developing activism initiatives.*
- RP 3: *Companies are willing to make a stand, implement their brand activism practises authentically.*

3.2 Research philosophy

Research Philosophy involves all beliefs and assumptions when developing knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 130). By establishing methodologies for the research within the social sciences, it is generally derived from ontological and epistemological assumptions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2015, pp. 46). Ontology indicates the nature of reality and how the researcher perceives the nature of reality, whereas epistemology is about

the theory of knowledge which helps researchers to inquire ways into the nature of the world (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 133; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2015, pp. 48).

Ontology explains philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality and can be seen as a scale (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2015, p. 47). It reflects whether the social reality should be studied as objective (one extreme), meaning that social entities "exist independently of how we think of them, label them or even are aware of them" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 135), whereas the subjective view (other extreme) holds the belief that there are many truths formed by each individual's perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (p. 137). Ontology can be put on a scale with four standpoints, where realism and internal realism is associated with the former and relativism and nominalism is related to the latter (p.134 – 136). The relativism assumption claims there are many truths, while the nominalism assumption states there is no truth (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2015, p. 50).

Ontology	Realism	Internal Realism	Relativism	Nominalism
Truth	Single truth	Truth exists, but is obscure	There are many 'truths'	There is no truth
Facts	Facts exist and can be revealed	Facts are concrete, but cannot be accessed directly	Facts depend on viewpoint of observer	Facts are all human creations

Figure 6: Four different ontologies by Easterby-Smith, Throbe and Jackson, 2015, p. 50

In this study the aim is to understand what corporations drive to advocate and how they guide the organisation internally to decide for which socio-political issues they stand up for and how they take action. Thus, the relativism ontological view will be applied, as pushing for change and dealing with socio-political issues is a reality which is socially constructed and social actors have different touchpoints, understandings and beliefs about it, namely they view the world differently (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2015, p. 50; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 134). When studying organisational processes when taking socio-political stances, it will be assumed that there will be a diverse set of "truths". Each answer depends on how he or she perceives the world and how this person's values and beliefs were formed and henceforward determine the individual response.

The Epistemology studies the "nature of knowledge and ways of enquiring into the physical and social worlds" (Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jackson, 2015, p. 51). It is concerned

with the question of how we know what we know (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p.135). Further, epistemology refers to assumptions and observations about knowledge which are being sourced by a diverse set of research data, ranging from textual data to numerical and visual data, all equally seen as valid and legitimate (p. 133). According to Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jackson (2015) there are two complementary understandings, when looking at epistemological research conduction in social science: positivism and social constructionism. Positivism is referred to reality as objective, meaning that the social world exists externally and can be measured by using objective methods, rather than being subjectively measured through sensation, reflection or intuition (p. 51). Social constructionism, as the terms says, describes reality as socially constructed by social actors giving meaning to it when interacting with others. The idea behind this concept is to understand how people make sense of the world, through sharing their experiences with others, mostly verbally (Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jackson, 2015, p. 52; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 137). It is used to gather new insights and an understanding of how people develop structures. Hence, with social constructionism different understandings of approaching and creating brand activism will be studied. More precisely, this thesis aims to capture how organisations decide on their stance taking and activism practises, and how they create their business around it. In order to get a better understanding the origin and the ambition to do so has to be studied by looking behind the organisation's scenes. Consequently, this thesis adopts a social constructive standpoint.

3.3 Research approach

The emphasis of the research design is how theory will be used and applied in the research project. It is depending on which reasoning the study adopts. Therefore, either the inductive or the deductive approach is used normally. The deductive approach however considers quantitative data aiming to develop propositions from existing theory in order to test those afterwards (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 154). To the contrary, the inductive approach is mostly used when qualitative data is sourced. Its purpose is to better understand the nature of a problem by understanding the circumstances, i.e. by conducting an interview (pp. 154; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2015, p. 24). Induction is supposed to be a "theory testing research", meaning that once the idea is developed established theories can be tested.

There is also a third reasoning when pursuing research, namely the abductive approach (sometimes referred to as retroduction). According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018), the abductive approach does not only move from theory to data (as in deduction) or from data to theory (as in induction) but combining both by moving back and forth between data and

theory (p. 155). This approach is used "to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and explain patterns" so the researcher creates new or modifies established theory (p. 160). It is said to start the research with a "surprising fact" which will then be explained by a plausible theory (p. 155). Dubois and Gadde (2002) stress that an abductive approach is especially rich if the researcher's aim is to discover new insights, other variables and other relationships. Additionally, the authors claim that it is rather a theory development, than a theory generation. This is being done by developing new combinations of existing theoretical models and new concepts which result from the confrontation with reality (p. 559). With this thesis, the researcher aims to broaden the knowledge around brand activism and complement the existing literature by enlightening the organisation's internal processes behind the theory. Thus, the phenomenon will be explored and authors who have written about it will be studied, but new insights are aimed to be discovered.

3.4 Research design

The research design helps turning the research question into an actual research project (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 173). According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018) it provides a framework of the collection and analysis of data by guiding the execution of it (p. 45). The research method however, is the technique for collecting data and should not be confused with the design. Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jackson (2015) claim that the research design is fundamental to gather high-quality research (p. 8). It should be written as a statement before any data is collected, as it explains and justifies what data is to be assembled, how and where from. Further, it presents how the data will be analysed and how it provides responses to the central research question (p. 68).

Given the nature of the research question concerning the internal processes behind brand activism practises, it is necessary to collect data from the organisational perspective, which is only possible by in-depth qualitative research. According to Easterby-Smith, Throbe and Jackson (2015) however, qualitative data is merely developed (not collected) by an interactive and interpretive non-numeric research method (p. 68). Further Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018) claim that "qualitative research is not necessarily intended to be replicated because it will reflect the socially constructed interpretations of participants in a particular setting at the time it is conducted." (p. 216). Nevertheless, the authors point out that the description of the research design, the context and methods may be beneficial for the execution of future studies (p. 216). Besides, having studied literature on brand activism, no sufficient evidence was found that firstly, brand activism was studied from an organisational backstage point of view (as

opposed to the study of the impact on consumers), and secondly, that the existing literature on the topic is rather recent and still in an early development stage at this point in time. Furthermore, research about the phenomenon of brands taking socio-political stances was found to be geographically conducted mainly from the United States, Brazil or Australia, but seldom from Europe or even Germany.

In correspondence with the purpose of this thesis, the nature of the research design is exploratory (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 186). In order to gain rich insights about the "what" and "how" regarding the topic of interest, the authors suggest to ask open questions. Hence, an exploratory study is especially suitable to help understanding an issue or a phenomenon, without knowing the nature of it before (p. 187). As evident of the literature review, it can be seen that the phenomenon of brand activism is relatively newly adopted, and thus the academic research is limited. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to gain new insights in order to understand how organisations manage themselves when publically communicating socio-political stances or taking action.

The authors further argue that when conducting in an exploratory nature, the data collection is likely to be unstructured, and thus relies on the quality of response from the contributing participants. However, exploratory research is likely to start with a broader focus becoming more detailed while the process continues (p. 187).

In this research, the questionnaire is designed to start with more broad questions regarding the individuals position etc. in order to gain insights about the participants' personal involvement with the organisation. By doing so later responses can be better understood and evaluated. After having used the reflexive tool called HARP (Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy) designed by Brostow and Saunders to support exploring the research philosophy, it showed a clear tendency of an interpretivist research approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 173). When having that in mind, gathering background information about the participants first and then narrowing it down to the actual research objective, allows more accurate interpretations by understanding linkages and setting fundamental impulses. Thus, the researcher is meant to make sense of the subjective and social constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied (p. 179).

3.5 Data collection method

According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018) in qualitative research, interviews are very likely the most widely used method (p. 434). An interview is "a purposeful conversation

between two or more people" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 434) evolving around questions and answers about a certain topic (Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jackson, 2015, p. 133). The interviewer is meant to ask short but clear questions so that the interviewee takes over by answering in his or her own way, while the interviewer puts emphasis on listening and exploring points of interests or clarifying and confirming meanings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 434). In line with that, also Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jackson (2015) outline that the main aim of qualitative interviewing is to gain an understanding from the respondent's perspective which additionally includes background information of why they hold that certain point of view (p. 135). Thus, in interviewing the purpose is to "capture the meaning and interpretation of phenomena in relation to the interviewees' worldviews" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009 by Easterby-Smith, Throbe and Jackson, 2015, p. 135). By making use of a subjective approach in interviewing, it is said that the social world of the data collection is socially constructed by firstly, the views and interpretations of the respondent and secondly, by the interviewer's perception when asking questions and interacting with the interviewee (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 436). As the aim is to gain rich and detailed (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2015, p. 435) insights from the organisational perspective without neglecting a broader understanding of why the organisation decides and behaves in certain ways, conducting qualitative data through interviewing in a one-to-one conversation seems to be the most reasonable method. Therefore, engaging with someone from the organisation, which is involved in taking socio-political stances, is the most suitable way to apprehend answers to the research question(s). It will further give more meaning and interpretation of the phenomenon of brand activism from the organisational point of view, which will, to the researcher's knowledge enrich the literature.

Both focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews can be used to gain insight when conducting qualitative data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 436). Even though focus group interviews may reveal different information by allowing participants to discuss their opinions, it also holds the risk of not gathering each respondent's entire point of view. This could be the case when one of the respondents is much more enthusiastic in sharing his or her viewpoint. In addition, participants could get influenced by the other's answers or feel uncomfortable by sharing their opinions and thoughts openly (p. 479). In contrast, one-to-one interviews allows much more focus on the individual respondent and gives time to listen to their opinions and experiences in greater detail (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2015, p. 478). In

order to reduce possible barriers and make sure to assemble rich and detailed data from each organisation individually, the interviews will be conducted on a one-on-one basis.

Semi-structured interviews

Further, interviews can be either structured, unstructured or semi-structured. Due to the fact that structured interviews are used for quantitative data collection only, further explanation can be skipped (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 437). Unstructured interviews, also called in-depth interviews, are of exploratory nature, often compared to having an informal conversation. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 437; Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jackson, 2015, p. 139). In-depth interviews do not have the need of previously defined questions or any guidance by the interviewer. Therefore, the respondent is likely to give the tone by talking freely about the topic of interest (defined by the interviewer), and share their opinions, beliefs and experiences with it (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 439). Semi-structured interviews however, can be also referred to an exploratory study (p. 443). Additionally, they allow a high flexibility as the researcher can ask the questions in any order and is able to spontaneously add questions to the interview guide if necessary. The previously defined list of questions is usually referred to as the interview guide. Adding questions to the interview guide might be helpful when the before mentioned is somehow unclear and needs further explanation or being built on, but is up to the researcher's evaluation (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2015, p. 436). By doing so, it gives the opportunity to probe meanings when the interviewee uses specific terms or talks about things in a particular way. This may add significance and depth to the gained data or lead the discussion into new areas of interest for the researcher. It also might open up to new spheres of study and might be important to understand and help addressing the research question(s) and objective. This is especially supportive as the topic around brand activism is so narrowly studied and to this point in time rather rarely applied in practise. To gain a broader understanding about what the organisations do in terms of taking stances, how they do it, and why, follow up questions are seen as important for this research. Hence, by using semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection the resulting data will be richer and more detailed and thus more comprehensible (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 445).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the summer of 2021, meaning that they had to be taken during the pandemic of Covid-19. As a consequence of the pandemic situation, the interviews had to be conducted remotely, also known as e-interviews, via Zoom.

According to Bell, Bryman and Harley, using video call interviews is a great alternative to face-to-face interviews and also holds a few advantages. Firstly, it is more time flexible and does allow conversations without any geographical barriers. Secondly, video calls are cost- and time saving as there is no need to travel. Thirdly, it is more convenient to be interviewed via Zoom (or any other video call software) which may encourage people to agree on the interview more likely. Additionally, there is little evidence that the quality of the interview is less good compared to face-to-face interviews, if the internet connection stays stable and no other technical problems occur (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2015, p. 453). Another benefit of e-interviews stated by Saunders, Throne and Thornhill (2018) is the possibility to directly produce an audio-visual recording of the interview, which allows the researcher to fully focus on the interview, without being distracted by taking notes at the same time (p. 478).

In order to capture the respondents' experiences with brand activism and understand the organisational processes behind being a political brand, e-interviews are believed to be a suitable method to conduct rich semi-structured interviews. Especially because the topic of interest was studied in the German market only, overcoming geographical boundaries by conducting the interviews online was the only suitable option. Consequently, by comparing face-to-face interviews and e-interviews there were no significant pitfalls discovered.

3.5.1 Sampling

According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2015), the research question usually gives indication of which unit needs to be sampled in order to provide answers for the study (p. 389). Due to the fact that the research question of this thesis already gives evidence of who the interviewees will be, this study does not follow a random sampling approach. In contrast, the goal is to sample interviewees in a strategic way, so that those participants are relevant to answer the research question, called purposive sampling, which is a non-probability form of sampling. Following this approach, researchers are not allowed to generalise their sample to a population (p. 389). The difference between a population and a sample is that a sample refers to a subset of the population entities from which the evidence is gathered (Easterby-Smith, Trope and Jackson, 2015, p. 77). In contrast to a fixed purposive sampling, the sequential approach is more flexible as the researcher starts with an initial sample and is able to add to that sample during the research process. Therefore, sampling units are chosen by the nature of relevance for the research following defined criteria (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018, p. 291). By selecting certain "criteria (…) that are informed by the research questions" the authors subcategorising purposive sampling into generic purposive sampling (pp. 395). Having said so,

the sampling criteria for this thesis are: The interviewee must (1) work in for-profit-organisation in Germany; (2) He or she must either be the founder or work in the communication department; (3) The organisation must have made any kind of public socio-political stance. The latter is greatly narrowing the possible sampling population, as to the researcher's knowledge and to this point in time, there is a limited number of corporations using their voice in socio-political debates. In order to avoid missing on more suitable interview participants, the snowball sampling was additionally being used. With snowball sampling, the researcher gets in contact with a small initial group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then reaches out to further introduced contacts. In addition, the snowball sampling does not require the construction of a sampling frame (p. 395).

Hence, the respondents were constituted of a homogenous group with knowledge and professional experience in the study field. When deciding if a respondent was qualified to participate in the interview, the researcher considered the above mentioned criteria, namely, if they were employed in for-profit organisation in Germany, if they were the founder or holding a management or leadership position in the communication department, and if the company communicated socio-political stances publically. Considering the concepts defined in the literature review, brands which take a stand in socio-political issues must be for-profit organisations. Also, the researcher chose German companies only, to have an aligned cultural ground. Also, brand activism is already well established in the German market, which additionally legitimates the researcher's choice (Kemming and Braun, 2019).

All the interviewees were approached via e-mail or personal message on LinkedIn, in case the founder or head of communication of a company of interest was known. By combining the methods of snowballing and purposive sampling it firstly involved identifying spokespersons of suitable companies for recruitment to the study cohort. The cohort members were then requested to recommend other potential respondents, who in turn suggested others. Besides, the researcher was considering the cohort's social media accounts as resource for more optional interview partners. By looking at partnerships, brand/product recommendations or going through "following profiles" more potential respondents were found. This sampling method is considered suitable since the desired target population was additionally hard to reach based on work commitments, lack of time and the geographical distance between researcher and interview candidates. Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jackson (2015) further claim that finding respondents volunteering for a student's research gets significantly harder as students and

institutions are increasingly competing to access to the limited number of organisations. Besides, approaching the first contact requires a lot of background research to, on the one hand, get a clearer idea if that contact might be valuable for the research, and on the other hand, approach potential contacts successfully (p. 175).

Following the sampling method, five respondents were found to conduct interviews with. All of them are employed in German based companies, operating in different industries. Table 2 gives an overview of the respondents of this study.

R	Name	Position	Sector	Company name	Information	Size	Founded in
1	Lisa Jaspers	CEO/ Founder	Fashion and Lifestyle	Folkdays GmbH	Appendix A	10	2012
2	Jessica Ashba	Brand manager	Healthtech	GoSpring (Wellster Healthtech Group)	Appendix B	65	2019
3	Katrin Engel	Head of communication	Textiles and Fashion	Ooia GmbH	Appendix C	24	2018
4	Anna Mehlem	Communication manager	Food and Beverage	True fruits GmbH	Appendix D	31	2010
5	Michael Fritz	CEO/ Founder	Drinking Water	Viva con Agua GmbH	Appendix E	35	2006

Table 2: Interviewee sample

As noted in the table, there were no more than five respondents interviewed. Given the circumstances, there was no possibility of sampling a greater number of respondents. Anyhow, the researcher is certain that the limited number of conducted interviews will still contribute to research as in that point in time literature on the research topic is very limited.

3.5.2 Interview guide

As suggested by Bell, Bryman and Harley (2015), for semi-structured interviews, it is helpful to create an interview guide. It is defined as a "plan for conducting a semi-structured interview containing opening comments, list of themes, questions and prompts to encourage discussion, and comments to close it." (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 806). Those comments are mainly added to give the possibility to stimulate the discussion (p. 438). According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2015), the interview guide should give as much flexibility as possible to allow the researcher understanding the respondent's perspective of the

world, meaning how they view reality (p. 439). This is essentially important for the data collection having great quality, as it helps analysing the collected data later. By starting with the research question, order and structure will eventually emerge and thus build the interview guide. Therefore, the authors suggest the following: (1) define areas of concern to create a fluent order (which can always be altered) to ask the questions; (2) formulate the questions and areas of concern so that each one contributes to the research question; (3) use a comprehensible language to lower possibilities of misunderstanding; and (4) collect personal information of the interviewee (i.e. name, age, occupation, number of years employed, etc.) to contextualise their answers (p. 440).

Hence, the interview guide for the semi-structured interviews was created to provide as much guidance for the researcher as possible. The areas of concern (subtitles) defined were: Introduction, icebreaker, definitions, drivers, process (how), outcomes, future and end. Therefore, the interview guide started with a short introduction of the research person, the title of the master thesis and thanking the interviewee for contributing to the research. With the "Icebreaker" the respondent was asked to give some background information about his or her position, the story behind that person and the organisation, etc. In the following, the interviewee was asked to give definitions in order to gain a better understanding of their knowledge regarding purpose driven companies, socio-political advocacy, brand activism, etc. After that, motivations regarding the activism practises or stance taking were questioned so that afterwards the process behind all that could be further explained. Then, the outcomes were asked to be defined, so that an understanding of the impacts on the stance taking by the organisations could be gained. Subsequently, the last topic before thanking for participation was asking the respondent to evaluate the future of their employer and how they see their organisation's purpose approach evolve. You can find the interview guide in appendix F.

3.5.3 Conducting the interviews

In total, four interviews were conducted via video calls, using Zoom. All these interviews were held between July, 28th and September, 6th 2021. Before each interview, the respondents were able to decide if they want to read into the questions and in which language the interview will be conducted, German or English. All of them decided to do it in their company language, which was also their mother tongue, German. Also, the researcher suggested them *not* to prepare for the interviews by reading potential questions beforehand. Thereby, the researcher wanted to circumvent possible biases of the validity of the respondent's replies, as they might have gotten tempted to inform their selves to feel better prepared for the

interview (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 455). When having asked the respondents to define terms they normally use in their work environment, the researcher tried to gain a better understanding and see if they were familiar with any of the theory. This reply might have become biased when the interviewees prepared their selves previously. Consequently, all of the three respondents came fully unprepared to the interviewees, only giving real-time ad hoc replies.

To capture every meaning, all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards. As mentioned in chapter 3.4, Bell, Bryman and Harley (2015) suggest that by recording the interviews, it gives freedom to the researcher to focus on listening to the interviewee without having to take notes. This usually contributes to higher data quality not only because the researcher is able to listen to the entire interview again, but also because it leads to a more natural conversation by allowing to ask for further requests or more detailed explanation (p. 478). Furthermore, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018) suggest that especially the first minutes of the interview should be used to create a welcoming atmosphere in which the respondent feels confident to share experiences, opinions and thoughts. That is why the interview guide as mentioned before, should start with a small introduction and welcoming words by the researcher. Besides, the respondents were always told when the interview and subsequently the recording started. After welcoming to the video call, the respondents were asked if they would agree on the recording of the interview. That helped to switch from the opening to the research conversation to start while remaining trustworthy and friendly. In line with the authors suggestion, the respondents were informed about the interviews being confidential and anonymous which in turn should encourage them to feel more relaxed and build up trust towards the interviewer (p. 456). Additionally, in order to avoid any biases, the interviewer's tone of voice should be rather neutral and the questions asked should be phrased clearly so that the respondents understand them. Also, it is advised to ask open questions without giving any tendency to reply (p. 457).

When making use of the abductive approach, it is intended to contribute to new findings which especially arises by asking open questions and remaining a flexible interview style. Thus, the questions asked are not only based on the literature. Finally, the interviews were rounded off by asking the respondents if there was anything to add to the before mentioned or if they wanted to make a final comment not necessarily related to anything discussed or asked before.

3.6 Data analysis method

Different to quantitative research, qualitative research involves in collection, analysis and interpretation of data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 638). In order to analyse and interpret the richness and fullness of the data systematically, the conducted interviews should be framed into a comparable and structured data collection (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 639; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2015, p. 185). Therefore, depending on the used guidelines the audio files can be transcribed into a written data format. The level of detail for the data transcription depends on the aims and methodological approach of the study (p. 186). In qualitative data analysis however, most researchers frame their collected data in a way it firstly, allows systematic reduction of the complexity and secondly, it facilitates the gradual development of theories about a phenomenon (p. 188). Thus, there are different approaches helping the researcher executing the data analysis accurately. In this study, the researcher aims to further explore the phenomenon of organisations making a stance and engaging in activism practises. Due to the fact that the existing literature on this topic is rather limited, especially when viewing it from organisational rather than the consumer perspective, ***content analysis*** seems to be the appropriate method to analyse the conducted interviews. It is defined as an approach that "aims at drawing systematic inferences from qualitative data that have been structured by a set of ideas or concepts" (p. 188). With ideas and concepts, the authors refer to pre-existing theory, meaning the research questions, hypothesis or the data itself. Although content analysis is a qualitative method while interpreting the data, the positivist framework enables to quantify the data to some levels also. For example, counting certain words, phrases or ideas as part of the analysis. In this study, the researcher will analyse the familiarity with terms like brand activism or socio-political advocacy and study the interviewees' motivation behind their practises. Therefore, not all the data will be counted and analysed in a quantitative manner, but certain words which are being used to an extent will be observed in more detail. In content analysis, a coding technique is being used to simplify the issue by choosing certain coding variables (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2015, p. 285). For this research the coding system was used to give the amount of data more structure by reducing its complexity and fragmenting data with similar meaning for better understanding or comparison. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018) explain that "Coding involves labelling each unit of data within a data item (such as a transcript or document) with a code that symbolises or summarises that extract's meaning." (p. 653). The data sets may include indications for "actions, behaviours, beliefs, conditions, events, ideas, interactions, outcomes, policies, relationships, strategies, etc." (p. 653). Thus, a code is a single word or phrase, whereas a unit of data includes

a number of words, a line of a transcript, one or several sentences or complete paragraphs. Some units of data may therefore overlap as they can be referred to several meanings.

The development of codes is mainly derived from three sources: (1) terms used by the respondents, often referred to as "in vivo" codes; (2) labels developed from data; and (3) terms or theories from existing literature, often referred to as "a priori" codes. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 655). In order to gain an understanding about the first and third, the respondents were asked in particular if brand activism or socio-political advocacy were terms the interviewees were familiar with and if these theories played a role in their practices. If not, they were asked to explain which terms they used instead and why. Regarding the second potential source for coding, the researcher already gained an understanding about the labelling by creating the interview guide, which was designed to help structure the interview questions into sub categories, namely introduction, definitions, process, outcomes and future. In addition, in the last row of the interview guide (presented as a table, see appendix F) the researcher added chapter indications to connect each question with the covered theories in the literature review of this thesis. Hence, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), tables, matrixes, or network diagrams make it easier to identify relevant concepts or relationships for answering the research question (Easterby-Smith, Thrope and Jacksons, 2015, p. 189). By making use of such a checklist, it can facilitate the data collection by making it more systematic and comparable (p. 189). Furthermore, the authors claim that those tables etc. can be also accompanied by mind maps, in order to help reflect and illustrate relationships and findings (p. 190). In turn, this complements the coding technique defined by Saunders, Lewis and Thorhill (2018).

3.7 Data validity and limitations

According to Mason (1996), internal validity refers to whether "you are observing, identifying, or 'measuring' what you say you are" (p. 24). External validity in contrast, refers to the degree of generalisation the researcher can make from his or her findings. Therefore, external validity is especially represented in qualitative research as research samples are rather small (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2015, p. 363). In contrast, the authors suggest that qualitative research is used to make theoretical generalisation, which is the "cogency of the theoretical reasoning, rather than statistical criteria that is decisive in considering the generalizability of the findings of qualitative research." (p. 375). In other words, the quality of the theoretical findings is fundamental to the evaluation of generalisation. The present qualitative research includes five transcribed interviews containing 40 pages of written data (see appendix G to K). The researcher is aware that the number of interviews is rather limited, but believes in the high

quality of the collected data as the interviewees were chosen precisely. Furthermore, there was no evidence found that the existing body of literature in brand activism covers insights about organisational perspectives, which leads to the conclusion that any new findings contribute to the present literature. Having said that, the researcher is aware that this thesis will not be representative for all German for-profit organisations engaging in activism practises, but it is sufficient valid to open-up new avenues of future research. In other words, the nature of this research, restricted to a small number of specific organisational contexts, could be expanded to other organisations to elicit such representation.

Another limitation felt during the research was that perhaps data was too focused on formal organisational speeches collected in the conducted interviews. For a more thorough approach, an *in loco* perspective for example through participant-observation methods would have probably yield additional insights to the findings. Additionally, it is to say that the analysis of the conducted raw data and the in-depth coding process cannot be assumed to be being biased-free, due to the interpretative approach. Also, no inter coder reliability agreement has been made.

As the interviewees (see table 2) differ in their job positions within the company, the CEO's/founder's might give different insights than the employed respondents. Therefore, results might be difficult to compare. Another fact that limits the data validity is that the conducted interviews had different time limits. At this point, it is to mention that R5 took the least time for the interview and did not give in-depth answers to the questions regarding the internal processes. However, the researcher decided that as this study was of qualitative nature only, without quantifying and comparing the outcomes, the interview was still supportive to gain a greater insight of different brand activism approaches. Lastly, the researcher is aware of the fact that the interviews can only portray a limited picture of the processes behind brand activism and therefore cause limitations, too.

3.8 Ethical considerations

When conducting research, it is important to anticipate and consider ethical and moral aspects from the beginning onwards (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 263). This means that the researcher should examine whether the research topic, the questions and objective imply any ethical issues. Authors normally refer to it as not causing any harm (p. 263). Later in the research, especially when conducting interviews, the researcher should follow ethical guidelines, which secure the rights of the participant (p. 264). Therefore, the researcher should obtain the interviewees' agreement to share the conducted data etc. This was not done as suggested by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2018), who claim that the respondents would need

to sign a consent form (p. 268), but by agreeing on the terms via email. The interviewees were further asked for their permission to record the video call. Only when they agreed during the call, the researcher started the recording. Also, by asking to give an introduction about their person, position in the company, etc., the participants had the option to refuse and persist of staying anonymous, which none of them did. Additionally, all of them participated by choice and to a time they agreed on. In particular, supposedly advanced due to the pandemic, they were all familiar with online video calls and Zoom as a platform, which might have positively influenced the atmosphere and the quality of the online interviews. According to many researchers, Bell, Bryman and Harley (2015) state that the possibility of face-to-face interaction via webcam, which was used in all interviews, was of high quality and broadly positively associated (p. 452). Also, as the aim of this thesis was not to study the participant's feelings towards something or to study their behaviour, there were no barriers noticed by holding the interviews online. Even though interviewee and interviewer were not physically located at the same place and the observation of reading the full body language was impossible, the researcher believes that this did not lead to less qualitative analysis (p. 115). To conclude, the rights of the participants were respected by being fully transparent about the research aim and its use, so that research ethics were considered throughout the whole research process. Finally, through the ethical writing of this thesis every effort was made to avoid plagiarism, to present all relevant facts known by the researcher and to discuss or report them credibly.

4 Data analysis

To reduce complexity and gain a better overview of the qualitative raw data a coding system was implemented. In order to derive the codes in alignment to the research question, the process was supported by using the software Atlas.ti. The application of programs like Atlas.ti is particularly helpful for "storing and locating qualitative data. Although the researcher still needs to go through each line of text and assign codes, this process may be faster and more efficient than hand coding" (Creswell, 2009, p. 188). The codes were developed in orientation of the three sources suggested by Saunders et al. (2018).

For each transcript of the respondents (in the following, all respondents are referred to R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5), the researcher followed an open coding approach through highlighting paragraphs and looking for buzzwords, by making use of the three coding sources suggested by Saunders et al. (2018). In short, the codes were either defined by predetermined codes derived by the studied literature, or emerging codes which were defined during the process of analysing

the raw data. This then resulted into a total number of 44 codes. In order to reduce even more complexity of the raw data, the codes were clustered into code groups and one subgroup. This helped getting an overview of the main themes and a deeper understanding of potential correlations. Furthermore, the researcher developed figures in the form of mind maps to visualise these correlations between the codes. The researcher coloured most of the codes matching its groups (see figures below). This however, was primarily used to simplify the coding process for the researcher and will not be further illustrated.

For the main themes, the researcher again derived existing data from theory and adjusted it during the coding process of the raw interview data. Therefore, the theoretical framework defined by Pimentel and Didonet (2021) was not only taken as basis for the interview guide but also as a coding map for the data analysis (see figure 8). The created code groups are quite similar to the derived main themes in which the following chapters will be clustered. The code groups are: (1) Four brand activism criteria, (2) Impulses, and (3) Formulation. There was one code subgroup created, which is namely, "Definition statements". Some of the codes can be find in several groups, some are assigned to one group only. Also, parts of the references were coded with more than one code. However, not all of the codes will be illustrated in the data analysis, because part of them were mainly defined to help the researcher gaining an overview.

Figure 7 below shows again the theoretical framework of Pimentel and Didonet (2021) in order see the transformation to the data analysis coding map (figure 8) which was based on that framework. As the research question concerns the process behind brands making a stand, some of the demonstrated topics in the framework (figure 7) will not be further outlined in this dissertation. Only the topics which respond to the objective of this thesis, and further the research propositions, will be implemented in the analysis and discussion. Also, during the coding process, the researcher developed further correlations and linkages which were not included in the theoretical framework of Pimentel and Didonet. Therefore, the data analysis coding map (figure 8) should give a grounded understanding about the conducted data and procedure of the following data analysis. The classified code groups represent the main themes which will structure the data analysis, namely (4.1) Brand activism characteristics; (4.2) Implementations to take a stand, (4.3) Formulation to act; and finally, (4.4) Impulses to take a stand.

As seen in figure 7, the brand activism process includes first, the content, second, the formulation, and third, the implementation. However, the term "content" is not called in any of the codes, code groups or main themes. This can be explained by the fact that Pimentel and Didonet (2021) define "content" in one sentence only, saying: "Brand activism content is understood as encompassing its purpose (what it is and towards what end) consisting of the set of choice of issue, relationships, offerings, timing, and pattern of resources that are deployed for competitive advantage." (p. 6). Correspondingly, the researcher will illustrate, firstly, the choice of issue and the purpose under the theme of brand activism characteristics, and secondly, relationships, offerings, timing and pattern of resources will be embodied in the other codes, too, as it would have otherwise only caused a higher complexity. Yet, the aim was to reduce complexity to respond to the research objective.

1. Brand activism scope
- Consumer
- Firms
- Corporation
- Society
- Market
- Stakeholders
- Shareholders
- Government

2. Brand activism agents
- CEO
- Brand
- Corporation
- Consumers
- Non-Governmental
- Organisations

3. Brand activism implementations
- Price
- Promotion
- Corporation
- Product
- Place

Brand activism concerns (Issues pertaining to)
- Society
- Politics
- Economy
- Workplace
- Environment
- Legal

Brand activism characteristics
- Purpose-and values driven
- Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarising
- Progressive or conservative stances
- Messaging and practice

4. Brand activism Environment
- Macro
- Industry
- Company

5. Brand activism relationships
- Drivers
- Outcomes
- Moderators
- Mediators

6. Brand activism Process
- Content
- Formulation
- Implementation

7. Brand activism context
- Corporate level
- Product-market level
- Business unit level
- C-level positions
- Corporate level

8. Brand activism effects
- Operational results
- Financial results
- Relationships
- Cultural and/or public opinion changes
- Changes in legislation

Figure 7: Theoretical framework of brand activism (by Pimentel and Didonet, 2021) (own illustration)

(4.3) Formulation
- Open discussions
- Challenging internal status quo
- Evaluating possible reactions
- Guided by purpose and values
- Including management
- Investing time and other resources
- No theoretical concepts/criteria
- Only in-house communication
- Open discussions
- Putting themselves into perspective
- Specific department

Process of taking a stand
- Content
- Formulation
- Implementation

(4.1) Brand activism characteristics
- Purpose-and values driven
- Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarising
- Progressive or conservative stances
- Messaging and practice

(4.4) Implementations to take a stand
- Implementation/ demonstrating
- Implementation/ educating
- Implementation/ engaging with community
- Implementation/ founder's voice
- Implementation/ keeping balance
- Implementation/ petition
- Implementation/ trust
- Implementation/ internally and/ or externally
- Implementation/ adapting internally
- Implementation/ advocacy
- Implementation/ collaborating with NGO's etc.

(4.2) Impulses to take a stand
- Macro environment
- Industry environment
- Company environment
- Not influenced by environment
- Guided by purpose and values

Figure 8: Data analysis coding map, adjusted from Pimentel and Didonet, 2021 (own illustration)

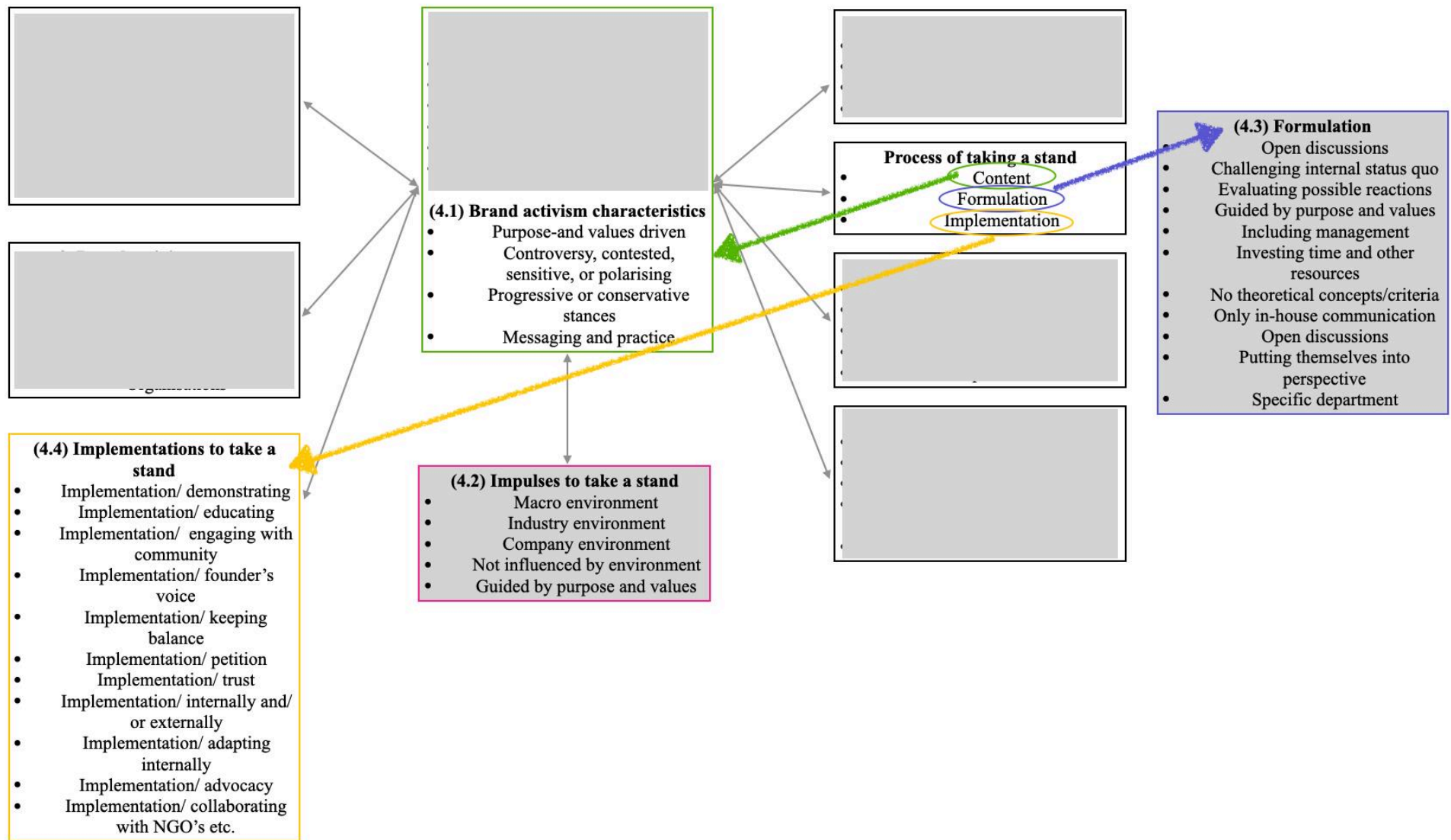Moreover, coding networks were created to illustrate each code group (and subsequently main themes) including the emerged correlations. The coding scheme below presents each code, along with number of statements where data was grounded and link to code groups and subgroups.

	Number of statements	Groups + subgroups
4.1 Brand activism characteristics		
Activist	7	Four brand activism criteria; Definition Statement
Implementation / advocacy	6	Four brand activism criteria; Implementation
Authentic activism	13	Four brand activism criteria; Definition Statement
Born with purpose	7	Four brand activism criteria
Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing	9	Four brand activism criteria
Implementation tangible and/or intangible		Four brand activism criteria; Implementation
Other characteristic definitions	7	Four brand activism criteria; Definition Statements
Purpose	10	Four brand activism criteria; Definition Statements
4.2 Impulses to take a stand		
Company environment	28	Impulses
Guided by purpose and values	40	Impulses, Formulation
Industry environment	15	Impulses
Macro environment	12	Impulses

Macro and Industry environment / Not influenced	9	Impulses
4.3 Formulation to act		
Challenging internal status quo	5	Formulation
Competence-based hierarchy	3	Formulation
Evaluating possible reactions	7	Formulation
Guided by purpose and values	40	Formulation; Impulses
Including management	5	Formulation
Investing time and other resources	6	Formulation
Specific department	4	Formulation
No theoretical concepts / criteria	15	Formulation
Only inhouse communication	4	Formulation
Open discussions	18	Formulation
Putting themselves into perspective	13	Formulation
Specific department	4	Formulation
4.4 Implementation to take a stand		Implementation

Implementation/ adapting internally	17	Implementation	
Implementation/ collaborating with NGOs etc.	1	Implementation	
Implementation/ demonstrating	3	Implementation	
Implementation/ educating	9	Implementation	
Implementation/ engaging with community	3	Implementation	
Implementation/ giving a voice	3	Implementation	
Implementation/ keeping balance	2	Implementation	
Implementation/ petition	3	Implementation	
Implementation/ advocacy	6	Implementation	
Implementation / founder's voice	5	Implementation	

Table 3: Coding scheme

4.1 Theme 1: Brand activism characteristics

The brand activism characteristics are based on the four brand activism criteria (by Vredenburg et al, 2020) as outlined in the previous literature review. Therefore, the interviews will be investigated following Vredenburg et al.'s (2020) four criteria to identify if the brands engage in activism (pp. 447). To be mentioned, Vredenburg et al.'s four criteria of brand activism were used by Pimentel and Didonet (2021) as "brand characteristics" in their theoretical framework: purpose and values driven; controversy, contested, sensitive or polarising; progressive or conservative stances; messaging and practice. However, it should be highlighted that the authors made minor adjustments within their framework, which will be taken over, i.e. the second point does not only include controversy, contested, or polarising

socio-political issues, but also sensitive ones. Whilst the network (see figure 13) created with the software Atlas.ti, gives an overview of all codes belonging to the code group "Four brand activism criteria", the tables (4 - 6) will assign the codes to answer the four criteria in alignment to the respondent's replies.
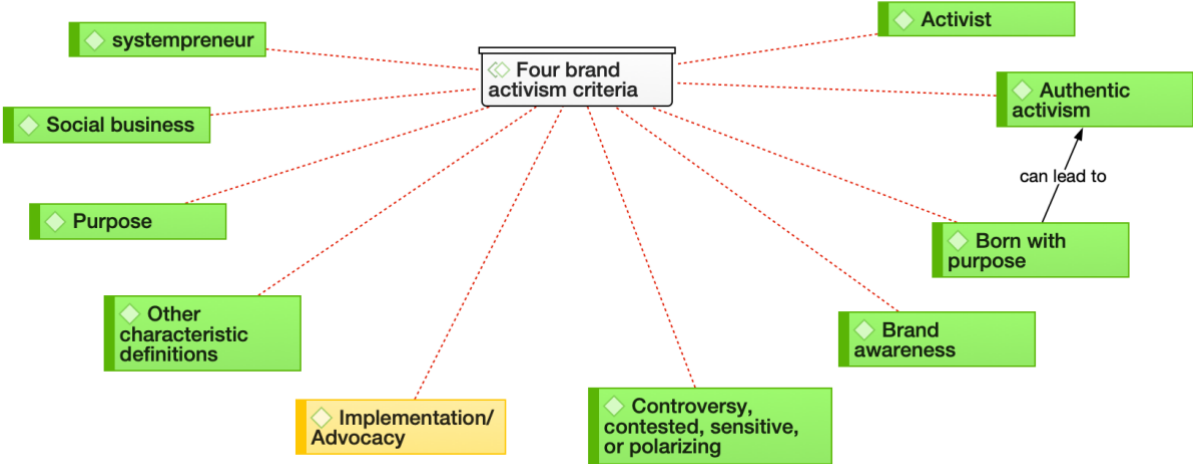

Figure 9: Network: Brand activism characteristics (own illustration with Atlas.ti)

Nevertheless, the tables (4 - 6) below will be illustrated by a reduced number of statements, clustered into codes, which answer the four criteria defined by Vredenburg et al. (including the adjustments by Pimentel and Didonet). This will demonstrate each organisation's own perspective on their engagement in brand activism, by including their definitions, motivation, implementation, etc. Additionally, the tables were created to give the reader a clearer picture of each organisation's operations. The citations are based on the numbering of the software Atlas.ti and can be found in appendix M.

(1) The brand is purpose and values-driven	
R1	**Code**
"And the purpose of Folkdays is...well, by now I would probably say two purposes, but they are probably directly related. One is, to establish value chains, or simply a way of doing business that benefits everyone. Both people who work for us here and people who work for us in our supply chains, as well as me as a founder. So, by that I don't necessarily mean just monetarily, but also as people, so to speak, finding fulfilment and of course also benefiting monetarily, but that it is simply a way of doing business everyone is benefitting from." (R1, 1:3)	Purpose

"...to create a workplace where the people who come here feel comfortable, are able to be theirselves and hopefully also develop on a personal level." (R1, 1:4)	Purpose
"Under the guise of "doing good" and, I think, with Folkdays, I was looking for a way of how to run a business on an equal level playing field. And absurdly enough, although this is of course counterintuitive in the capitalist system, business is much more at eye level than charity, and accordingly that was our focus from the beginning." (R1, 1:1)	Born with purpose
R2	**Code**
"...the purpose of GoSpring is to give men serenity to overcome their health challenges with ease. And the values will be to be discreet, to be approachable, to solve problems, and to actually enable others to not feel excluded." (R2, 2:3)	Purpose
"So offering solutions for customers that really struggle in their day to day life, making their life more simple." (R2, 2:1)	Purpose
R3	**Code**
"And the whole thing is basically based on three pillars that Kati and Christine have defined for their company. One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics. The second pillar is simply the economic profitability, and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work. And these are basically three pillars that must never be neglected in the decision-making process." (R2, 3:5)	Purpose
"Because they (the two founders) really go deep, discuss very profound topics, invest a lot of time and energy and simply because it comes from heart, because it is so important to them." (R3, 3:11)	Born with purpose

R4	Code
"So "truefruits, no tricks" is what I would say are the values we represent here 100 percent." (R4, 4:39)	Purpose
"But the main thing for us is just to have fun." (R4, 4:87)	Purpose
"This has definitely been the case since the beginning and has been communicated in exactly the same way for 16 years now. Which means that our brand was exactly the same 16 years ago, I would say, in the way it is communicated now." (R4, 4:78)	Born with purpose

R5	Code
"...we believe that we can change the world in a positive, joyful and loving way and that is our core." (R5, 5:1)	Purpose
"...we are also a social business, or several social businesses and foundations, represented in eight countries worldwide, working for access to clean drinking water. There are still 569 million people without access to clean drinking water and 4.2 billion without access to decent sanitation and supplies. We are working for access to clean drinking water and that is why we are working on the ground and why we founded it ourselves." (R5, 5:2)	Purpose; Born with purpose
"Purpose is the be-all and end-all, there would be nothing without Viva Con Agua. This whole number of Purpose nowadays, in the 21st century... so we started like that, so we've been like that for a very long time. We've always been a Purpose company, so I can't say anything else about it, except that it's always been our theme." (R5, 5:12)	Born with purpose

Table 4: *Data analysis on Theme 1 - Brand characteristics (1)*

(2) It addresses a controversy contested, sensitive, or polarizing socio-political issue(s) **(3) The issue can be progressive or conservative in nature (issues are subjective and determined by political ideology, religion, and other ideologies/beliefs)**	

R1	Code
"And the last time we had a short discussion was when I said I would love to have a conversation with Kübra Gümüca, who has written a book and is wearing a headscarf. And then one of the team members said, "That's cool, but only that we are aware of it. It's possible that people will come and hate us for inviting her." (R1, 1:79)	Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing

R2	Code
„We're provocative, so we're really not scared to actually put ourselves out there and use provocative words." (R2, 2:34)	Implementation; Implementation/ Advocacy; Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing
"And I would say that with GoSpring, we are for sure trying to break the norm, trying to make it okay to have an erectile dysfunction or to have a premature ejaculation. So, we are standing up for those people, we are trying to break the taboo and trying to break the shame topic, the shame point around this. (R2, 2:6)	Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing

R3	Code
"But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something." (R3, 3:3)	Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing
"I believe that as soon as you stick a big toe into one area, that you are somehow engaged with, then you are committed and there is no way to stop. Then, it means immediately, but why? So, imagine you are committed to one cause, e.g. to feminism, then don't let yourself seen with a take-away coffee mug ever again." (R3, 3:34)	Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing

R4	Code
"We don't want to be "everybody's darling" (R4, 4:68)	Macro Environment; Formulation;

	Putting themselves into perspective; Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing
"And we are perhaps personally a bit more communicative, more provocative. Or we're not at a loss for words, we say what we think." (R4, 4:94)	Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing
"Then it's more like, we try not to offer a platform to those people who deliberately stir up and provoke a topic. In other words, we usually don't jump on what they throw at us. Because we know very well that the goal is for us to respond, so that they can escalate even more and that we can't get out of the situation, so that a discussion ensues that never ends. (R4, 4:95)	Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing
R5	**Code**
"And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, ..." (R5, 5:20)	Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing

Table 5: Data analysis on Theme 1 - Brand characteristics (2)and (3)

(4) and the firm contributes toward a socio-political issue(s) through (a) messaging and (b) brand practice	
R1	**Code**
(a) *"I do an Instagram Live format where I talk to different port leaders about different topics that go beyond Folkdays."* (R1, 1:43)	Implementation; Implementation / giving a voice; Implementation Founder's voice; Implementation tangible and/or intangible
(b)	Implementation; Implementation / petition;

	Code
"...but also with Folkdays, and also of course with a lot of support from the team, we have started this campaign "fair by law". In the end, we wanted to push the government to pass a supply chain law three years ago. That is activist." (R1, 1:8)	Implementation tangible and/or intangible

R2	**Code**
(a) & (b) *"Let's make erections great again!" And on the other side, we had the writing of: "Everyone deserves love equality and erections!" So the Christopher Street Day is a demonstration for the rights and equality of homosexual people in Germany, which is why we wanted to support that, but we still wanted to add a message here and say: Hey, you all deserve love. You all deserve equality, but you all deserve erections as well, because this is another taboo which needs to be broken."* (R2, 2:17)	Implementation/ demonstrating; Implementation tangible and/or intangible
(b) *"Like, for example, the Christopher Street Day. So, we are invested in this and we live by this even our company, so everyone, regardless of your sexuality is part of it."* (R2, 2:22)	Implementation/ demonstrating; Implementation / adapting internally; Implementation tangible and/or intangible
(b) *"So, we gave voice to the gay men of this parade. Since they were actually demonstrating for the Equal Rights, it was a kind of way for them to demonstrate for them to actually have the right to have an erection as well."* (R2, 2:19)	Implementation/ demonstrating; Implementation / giving a voice; Implementation tangible and/or intangible

R3	**Code**
(a) & (b) *"But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something. And Christine and Kati cover a lot of different topics in our (Instagram) stories, that's a little bit like…you know, the stories are just a bit more free and independent compared to our other channels."*	Implementation; Implementation/ educating; Implementation / Founder's Voice; Implementation tangible and/or intangible

(a) & (b) *"Hmm, so for example we talked about it before, it was about working independently of time and place, and we were writing some content on that topic giving tips about it."* (R3, 3:16)	Implementation / educating; Implementation tangible and/or intangible
(b) *"So where we really get involved as Ooia, it's mostly with topics that just go very well with us. Well, we work together with the CIJ, it's the "Center For Intersectional Justice". A lot of it deals with feministic issues. We also collaborated with "Wash United", it was about period poverty and so on."* (R3, 3:31)	Implementation/ educating; Implementation tangible and/or intangible
R4	**Code**
(a) *"Because of course, as we always act in all our communication, we always give a lot of thought to all the sentences that get posted or to all the wordings. And we have looked at the whole thing five times. And that's also how it is with critical comments and when we plan a major campaign and know in advance. "Okay, this and that will be coming soon, there will probably be several posts about it, there's a whole bottle for it in the shop or the posters are hanging in the cities…"* (R4, 4:94)	Implementation/ Advocacy
(b) There was no comment found regarding brand practice on R5.	
R5	**Code**
(a) *"And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, ..."* (R5, 5:20)	Implementation; Implementation/ educating; Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing
(b)	Born with purpose; Implementation tangible and/or

"There are still 569 million people without access to clean drinking water and 4.2 billion without access to decent sanitation and supplies. We are working for access to clean drinking water and that is why we are working on the ground and why we founded it ourselves." (R5, 5:2)	intangible; Purpose;

Table 6: Data analysis on Theme 1 - Brand characteristics (4)

4.2 Theme 2: Impulses to take a stand

The second theme which derived from both, the theoretical framework of Pimentel and Didonet, and the emerging code groups, will be presented next. To respond to the research objective, which is how organisations organise themselves when they plan an activism initiative, this is normally triggered by some kind of impulses. Therefore, the researcher made use of the concepts derived from literature, namely the three different stations of environment ("Company-, Industry- and Macro environment"). However, during the conduction and analysis it became clear that the respondents repeatedly mentioned their detachment of macro- and industry environment. Therefore, the researcher designed the code: "Macro + Industry environment / Not influenced" to underline this. Also, the code "Guided by purpose and values", which is additionally part of the code group "Formulation to act" (and therefore is coloured differently, see figure 10), sets impulses for the organisation's activism practises.
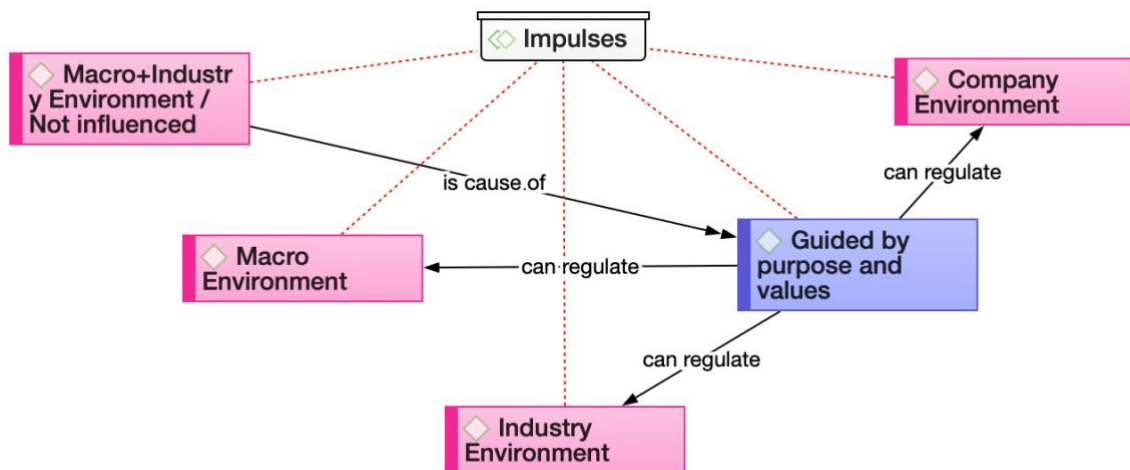

Figure 10: Network: Impulses to take a stand (own illustration with Atlas.ti)

Derived from theory by Pimentel and Didonet, the three factors which guide decisions, actions and outcomes of the brand activism of a company, will be considered. Therefore, the code "Macro environment" was used when institutions and macro-societal factors seem to trigger a sort of company behaviour. The code regarding "Industry environment" was assigned

to the quotes which stated influences of external stakeholders, suppliers, customers, competitors, partners, etc. Lastly, the third code derived from literature, is "Company environment" and comprises internal elements affecting strategic decisions of how to behave when responding and/or overcoming constraints and taking advantage of opportunities. To specify, the company's environment includes "culture, skills, resources, capabilities, collective beliefs, etc." (p. 6). Therefore, as illustrated in the literature review before, all of the environments and impulses can evoke the need to take stances and/or act towards a solution of socio-political issues and corresponding statements will be evaluated in the following. The correlations between the codes can be seen in the "Network: Impulses to take a stand" (figure 10).

As mentioned earlier, the codes have certain correlations with each other. Hence, there will not be demonstrated quotes under the code "Guided by purpose and values" in particular, because, as illustrated in figure 10, the codes are related to it anyways. For instance, whenever one of the environments trigger a call to action for the company, they will in turn evaluate their decision, based on their purpose and value. To further demonstrate, most suited quotes for each respondent will be presented in table 7 below.

Company environment
R1
"So I think it's always a bit of a negotiation process between all of us, but I think we manage quite well because I think we all stand wholeheartedly behind what we do and nobody optimises them self." (R1, 1:25)
"I think we address all the things that move us as a team or as individuals..." (R1, 1:34)
"...some of the topics are also initiated by me, but actually everyone in our team is interested in these topic and maybe even informs themselves about these topics or is active or whatever. (R1, 1:37)
R2

"So, you can really notice that people are part of it to their heart and with their gut and with everything that have, so...." (R2, 2:23)

"They're all very invested. So as I said, here, even in the company we do accept and live by everyone has a right and everyone has the same rights, and it's all equal. So, everyone is emotionally invested, because we are friends here at the office at the end of the day. So, even by being there at that demonstration, we're still not just demonstrating for the others, but we're also demonstrating for our friends at the company as well. So, everyone is involved. So on a personal level as well. (R2, 2:30)

R3

"But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something." (R3, 3:26)

"With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics." (R3, 3:3)

R4

"But we don't want the perfect family product, we want a product for everyone. And we are perhaps personally a bit more communicative, more provocative. (R4, 4:79)

"But the main thing for us is just to have fun." (R4, 4:87)

"And yes, the interpersonal aspect is also a huge factor, I think that's also very important for the decision-making process, that no one here feels like "Cancel Culture".... No one here feels somehow cancelled in their opinion, which they can express. Everyone can say what they want without thinking, "Ohh, if I say that,...that probably won't be perceived well. Then I'd better keep my mouth shut." (R4, 4:54)

R5

"Everything we do is social, so all our social businesses are social to the maximum and have the same values, they all originated from the association, so they are all relatively congruent and our businesses are no different than our NGO or foundation." (R5, 5:9)

Industry environment

R1

"I don't know to what extent our producers will notice that we have fought for a supply chain law and so on." (R1, 1:53)

The following statement even combines Industry- and Marco environment:

"...things are going wild in Afghanistan right now, I don't know if you've heard. At the end of the day, we also have two sisters from Afghanistan with whom we work, with whom we sell earrings, and I think it would be cool to push the whole issue of Afghanistan a bit more. No, so to say that we are positioning ourselves on this and simply draw a bit of attention to it, I think that would be something that would totally suit us. So that we are somehow taking on an activist role in relation to it." (R1, 1:38)

R2

"And we saw that only 6 or 7% of our customer base was actually homosexual. And we know that generally 10% of the population is statistically homosexual. So we were wondering, perhaps, does this problem occur less with homosexuals or not? We were open to it. So then the idea popped up. Okay, perhaps we are very strong present in the channels were (...) more heterosexual men are in." (R2, 2:15)

R3

"...we had a campaign for the "International Women's Day", where we thought, okay, a lot of people just go like this: "Okay, tell us your story, what happened to you? What happened to you unjustly? Or so... Then we thought okay, a hundred other channels do that too. We might think more ahead and then we came up with a campaign, where we recorded common prejudices against women and how you have a quick-witted answer to them." (R3, 3:40)

R4

"*And then we also thought: "Are we going to comment on this? Or do we not comment on it?" Because we've been approached here so often about us being so racist and having such a bad image. "And if we do that now, then it's going to be so greenwashing." "Now you're posting this too and pretending to be the harmless ones", that's how we go through it in our heads."* (R4, 4:26)

"Retail is also becoming more and more cautious, because people are then also being approached in the market." (R4, 4:70)

R5

There was no comment found regarding the influence of the industry on R5.

(a) Macro environment

(b) Marco + Industry environment / Not influenced

R1

(b) *"For marketing reasons, we would never say: "Okay, we don't talk about these topics. We don't want to talk about racism openly because it's somehow unsexy or some people feel put on the spot."* (R1, 1:48)

(b) *"So we just say okay, we can't please everybody." (R1, 1:42)*

R2

(a) *"Because so many people suffer from it, but everyone deserves it, so every man deserves to have an erection. So, we see that people actually are hurt, they are insecure, and so on. So, we see that there is need there, which is why we stand up for it, and how do we live it within our organization?"* (R2, 2:9)

(b) *"Because we don't believe that it is our place to say something about war, or to say something about abortion rules in the USA. So no, we do stand out. We do state our opinion when it has to do with us and with what we often will with what we stand for, but that's it."* (R2, 2:21)

R3

(a) *"So there are sometimes, especially when you have addressed topics like Corona vaccination or something,…then sometimes there are people turn up as vaccination opponent. So, you just have to react in a cool way then. Also, you need to decide if you want to spend*

your time with that in the end of the day and with whom to deal with, and with whom to discuss and with whom not.” (R3, 3:45)

(b) *“Because, you always have to evaluate if it's about jumping on a bandwagon or what are the issues that you stand for?”* (R3, 1:38)

R4

(a) *“Very sad, but true, things that we did six years ago...there are some things we would perhaps no longer do in the same way, because the consequences are probably a bit bigger now or we see the whole thing from a different angle now. Because six years ago many issues were simply not yet on the table. Nobody cared and realised back then, and now everything is seen and everything is criticised. And you can basically only do everything wrong.”* (R2, 2:21)

(a) *“But that's another topic that is developing over time. It wasn't an issue four or five years ago. But it's just that people are becoming more and more cautious.”* (R4, 4:69)

(b) *“We don't want to be "everybody's darling".”* (R4, 4:68)

R5

(b) *“No, we don't always give our opinion, that's not what Viva Con Agua is about, but we try to offer joyful engagement to the people.”* (R5, 5:13)

(b) *“Again, we try to make as few side issues as possible and just try to be active and thereby get involved, but not jumping on all the issues that are out there all the time.”* (R5, 5:10)

Table 7: Data analysis on Theme 2 - Impulses to take a stand

4.3 Theme 3: Formulation to act

In line with the research objective, "Formulation" was by far the most coded code group that occurred 68 times during the conduction and analysis of the semi-structured interviews. It is part of the internal process with an interactive and iterative nature, as described by Pimentel and Didonet (2021). In order to understand the procedure behind organisations taking a stand, the interviews were conducted in a way to gain insights of how they organise themselves internally. As there could not be any literature found regarding the internal processes of brand activism practises, the researcher based the codes on emerging keywords, mentioned by the respondents. Hence, for the formulation the following codes have been developed (see figure

11): "No theoretical concepts"; "Putting themselves into perspective"; "Evaluating possible reactions"; "Open discussions"; "Competence-based hierarchy"; "Only in-house communication"; "Investing time and other resources"; "Including management"; "Challenging internal status quo"; "Guided by purpose and values"; and "Specific department". To get a clearer understanding, the researcher added correlations between the codes, which can be seen in figure 11.
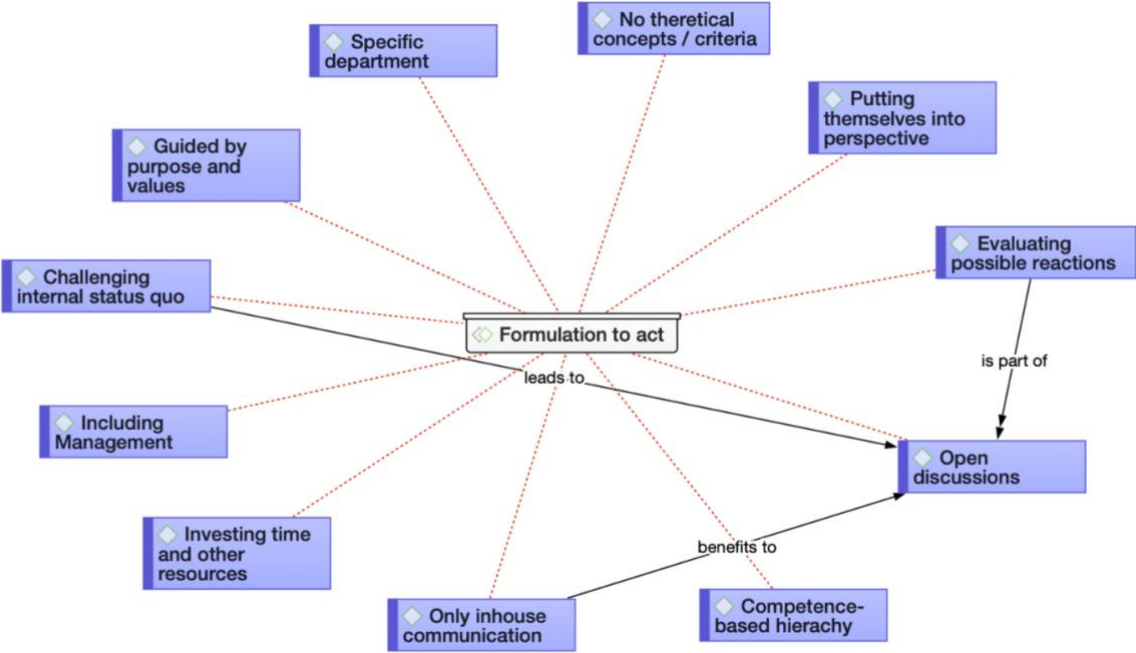

Figure 11: *Network: Formulation to act (own illustration with Atlas.ti)*

As "formulation to act" is the most important and most occurred theme to answer the research question, the majority of the codes will be outlined in the following, and associations between respondents will be done. For this reason, there will not presented evidence in tables as done before.

The most occurred code in the code group "formulation" with an amount of 38 references was ***"Guided by purpose and values".*** However, there was also a question in the interview guide asking them to define purpose and values of the company. All of the respondents had a clear answer to the question. Further, four (R1, R2, R3, and R4) out of five respondents stated that their purpose and values sometimes also helps guiding them to decide against e.g. jumping on a bandwagon.

R1 for instance stated: *"And I don't have the feeling that this has ever really been in conflict. So maybe a situation in which we have to decide to sell via Amazon or not. Where we then decide quite clearly against it."* (R1, 1:26). By claiming that the decision was "quite clearly" been made, it highlights the fact that they were guided by company values which cannot be neglected when making business decisions. When the respondent was then asked if her organisation considers potential negative reactions to their activism in advance, she replied: *"And even if I had known that we would lose followers, I would have done it anyway, because she is so smart and I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart."* (R1, 1:47). Before, when she was asked to what extend Folkdays would integrate its purpose into the business strategy, she even said: *"...the moment we don't have a purpose anymore, we would stop doing it."* (R1, 1:21).

When R2 was asked whether they were following certain criteria when organising events facing socio-political issues, she replied by word: *"It has to be aligned with our purpose and with our values. So, we will not go to a rock concert where there's only music, I mean, it would be actually meaningless. So, there has to be a meaning behind it. And it has to be aligned with what we stand for. And what we want to reach."* (R2, 2:20). She further reported: *"the purpose of GoSpring is to give men serenity to overcome their health challenges with ease. And the values will be to be discreet, to be approachable, to solve problems, and to actually enable others to not feel excluded."* (R2, 2:3). Her answer to what drives her organisation to stand up for certain topics was as follows: *"everyone actually deserves to love. And everyone deserves to actually have a fulfilled sex life, regardless how, regardless with whom, and having something like erectile dysfunction, which so many men have, it is something which which cranks us up, and which says: Oh, we really need to do something about it!"* (R2, 2:8). Furthermore, she explained that they also decide against taking stances on socio-political issues which do not align with their purpose: *"So why we do not put any statements about politics or about what's happening in the world? Because we don't believe that it is our place to say something about war, or to say something about abortion rules in the USA. So no, we do stand out. We do state our opinion when it has to do with us and with what we often will do…with what we stand for, but that's it."* (R2, 2:21).

The third respondent literally said that *"...there are certain values that guide us how we work and how we treat each other. I would say that it is lived very well."* (R3, 3:22).

Additionally, R3 stated her organisation's decisions are being made based on *"three pillars that must never be neglected in the decision-making process."* (R3, 3:6). *"One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics. The second pillar is simply the economic profitability, and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work."* (R3, 3:65). She then gave an example: *"because we could of course easily say we are now expanding into the USA, but that would, for example, certainly contribute to social change and economic efficiency, but currently simply contradicts with the family-friendly, because they would have to travel far too much, or we would all have to travel way too much or something."* (R3, 3:7). Further, she added: *"You could also say we start producing, I don't know, a great shoe or whatever, but does the world need another shoe? It probably would somehow bring good money, but does it also represent social change? So the things we do have to somehow meet these three factors."* (R3, 3:8). In contrast, R3 said that there were subjects, which they do not even have to think about because they would align with their purpose so well: *"But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something."* (R3, 3:26). This is also highlighted by the following statement: *"There are things where we just know very clearly, okay, that matches us one hundred percent, but of course there are also things where you have the feeling that you would jump on a bandwagon, and we normally do not actively engage in. I think it's a discovery phase, but I would say there is almost no limit in the stories."* (R3, 3:31). Finally, the respondent mentioned: *"Look, even as a company, you can't deal with all topics."* (R3, 3:36), which underlines the importance of a value and purpose definition to guide the organisation's decision making.

Similar to the other respondents, also R4 took her organisation's purpose as an example to decide against speaking up on a topic everyone talks about: *"Even if we think now, for example, the federal election is coming up soon, probably a lot of companies will do something on the federal election...but we would now say "okay, that's definitely a topic we could gain attention with, or as other companies would probably say, we can perform well with that", but we say "we absolutely don't feel like doing anything on that. We don't want to comment." Because our main goal is not to perform well, our main goal is to stay true to our line. Then we don't do anything about that."* (R4, 4:11).

R4 stated their guiding value as follows: *"truefruits, no tricks." "We always say we don't take ourselves too seriously, but we take our product all the more seriously for that."* (R4, 4:1). She clearly differentiated between their communication and their product development by saying: *"And we don't take ourselves too seriously when it comes to communication. So "truefruits, no tricks" is what I would say are the values we represent here 100 percent."* (R4, 4:2). She then put emphasis on values coming from the employees, too: *"And that everything is actually in line with the values of the employees here, because that's what makes us special and, above all, because a lot of personality flows in here and it's not a predetermined line that has to be followed, but the opinion, no matter which employee it is, whether it's a trainee, an intern or a senior position, every opinion is equal and every personal value also counts here."* (R4, 4:3). Later she gave an example which shows the commitment they are putting into their values, for instance by giving a voice to all their employees: *"...if someone speaks out very strongly against a topic and says: "Hey, guys, if we do this, then I have a very strong stomach ache", or "I can't reconcile this with myself", then we don't do it! So if the team doesn't feel comfortable with it, cause they are also the ones who have to pay for it if something goes wrong, let it be with communication, in community management, e-mails or other channels, then it won't be implemented."* (R4, 4:13). To additionally highlight R4's belief of how her organisation follows their line, the following statement will be quoted: *"But we were honest and we gave an honest answer. I think the most important thing is that we can just always go to bed at night with a clear conscience. We stayed true to ourselves and we didn't prostitute ourselves for anyone in order to get something in return."* (R4, 4:62). Similar to how they implement the value of free speech in their internal communication, R4 also pointed out that they were *"perhaps personally a bit more communicative, more provocative.",* and that they were *"not at a loss for words, we say what we think"* (R4, 4:79) in marketing communication. However, she further said*: "But the main thing for us is just to have fun."* (R4, 4:87).

Similar to that, R5 also said: *"...we are allowed to work very freely and we believe that we can change the world in a positive, joyful and loving way and that is our core. That we always stay positive and always try to transform, to always change the world positively."* (R5, 5:1). He further added that *"...for me Viva Con Agua is much more than a brand... ehm, Viva con Agua is an attitude towards life, a philosophy, a social business, a culture, simply more than a brand."* (R5, 5:5). Based on that they take decisions, as the respondent further said: *"Again, we try to make as few side issues as possible and just try to be active and thereby get*

involved, but not jumping on all the issues that are out there all the time." (R5, 5:10). To give a clearer image he then added: *"We are very clear in our communication: "Clean drinking water, decent sanitation - and hygiene" and even if abortion is an issue in Texas right now, I might play that on the very personal level, on my social media profiles, but not Viva Con Agua, because Viva Con Agua cares about clean drinking water and decent sanitation and I think that's also very important for us because otherwise we would dilute ourselves."* (R5, 5:11).

Another often referenced code was named ***"No theoretical concepts/ criteria"*** and was merely evoked by first, asking the interviewees if they were familiar with terms like brand activism or socio-political advocacy, and whether they would use it as a guidance or not. Second, the researcher wanted to know if they would organise themselves using some kind of criteria. And third, codes got assigned by when respondents explained a rather open and spontaneous approach in decision making. Noticeably, none of the respondents replied by affirming to base any of their actions, neither on literature, nor on theoretical criteria.

Thus, respondent one was stated: *"No, we don't have any criteria. I would say that we always do it very discursively here."* (R1, 1:56). However, she later mentioned: *"So, yes, what we have in terms of structure is a feedback process…"* (R1, 1:33). Anyhow, this is regardless from their activism practises, but shows that they are having a *"good level of communication"* (R1, 1:61) in the team.

R2 for instance, did not even know the concepts: *"So, I didn't know the terms until you told me about them that those terms actually exist."* (R2, 2:5)

This gets also confirmed by what R3 has said: *"…because it is not that one said that is now a theory, or that is a term and we try that, maybe it will work for Ooia, so to speak. But it all started with the thought and with the inner need from the beginning onwards."* (R3, 3:13). The respondent further claims: *"And I think that as a corporate strategy you can easily be able to present yourself a little artificial (meaning unauthentic), but it has to come very, very deeply from you so that you can implement it really well."* (R3, 3:9). Finally, she also adds: *"So I don't think that these are topics that we somehow read up to in theory and then apply, but there is such a strong DNA within Ooia that it is actually clear."* (R3, 3:66)

The fourth respondent even referred to other terms, when she was asked whether she was familiar with brand activism or socio-political advocacy: *"We don't really have such concepts here, we just orientate ourselves according to them, so it rings a bell, but rather from my student days and not from my working days, so to speak. But I think brand awareness and…what also comes up all the time, also in the professional world, is political correctness, at every corner, which is hotter than ever before."* (R4, 4:4).

She further added several comments on working without predefined plans: *"So it's not a well thought-out plan that we usually have."* (R4, 4:44).

I think one thing that keeps us alive here or that keeps us from getting bored here, which is probably very, very different from many other companies, is that we never work according to any plans." (R4, 4:84).

"So a lot of things really happen out of impulse, and I can say that very clearly because I do the project management. I don't have a ready-made plan. And we are also very quick in the decision-making process. And we don't set ourselves any goals. Yes, we don't really have any goals. And that's why we can all work very easily and well, because we don't have any pressure. We absolutely have to do something now, even if we don't think it's so good, but that's the goal of the year or something. Yes, well, I also find that very exciting. That we work in a very agile way, more like real time marketing. Although we don't really like to use such terms, but we react very spontaneously." (R4, 4:86).

Even though R4 it cannot be quoted directly, their spontaneous way of working is further illustrated by this statement: *"And then they thought, okay, how do we fill the space on the bottle? There's a lot of space on it. What else can we use the space for? Yeah, then let's make the product even cooler and we'll still write cool stuff on it, because Nick, one of the founders, is a super good lyricist who has always cracked funny lines anyway. Let's use the space on the bottle so that you don't throw it away again straight away, but keep it and also have a bit of a chat while you drink the smoothie."* (R4, 4:80).

The fifth respondent certainly refused his organisation being a brand activist or engaging in advocacy, and did not regard to his organisations way of structuring: *"Brand activism or socio-political advocacy..., brand activism yes, but for me Viva Con Agua is much more than a*

brand... ehm, Viva con Agua is an attitude towards life, a philosophy, a social business, a culture, simply more than a brand. Socio-political lobbying or advocacy I understand of course and that is also very important, but we don't work so much in this political advocacy, but we try to change the world positively with civil society universal languages like art, music, culture." (R5, 5:7)

The second most occurring code was called ***"Open discussions"*** which seems to play a major role in the interviewed companies, even though R5 did not mention anything about it.

Starting with R1, who was referenced 11 times on "open discussions", she said: *"But I do believe that we have a culture here where everyone is allowed to ask everything, and say everything, and question everything, and does so."* (R1, 1:15). She further adds: *"I'm firmly convinced that we come to better decisions when we make the decision together."* (R1, 1:32).

As R1 is the founder, she also initiates open discussions actively: *"And I would probably propose it and post it into our social media group. And then everyone would probably say "yeah, let's do it" and then we would do it. Or just say: "Boor no, I think it's too hot, the situation is somehow too messy, I have a bad feeling about it...let's maybe wait a little bit on how it evolves." So, then it would just happen like this."* (R1, 1:39). Later, she gave an example: *"And the last time we had a short discussion was when I said I would love to have a conversation with Kübra Gümüca, who has written a book and is wearing a headscarf."* (R1, 1:44).

Considering her being the founder, she also stated how she rejects making decisions by herself: *"I don't want to decide that by myself. I would only do it if we all stand behind it. And I don't want to co-work like that. I don't want to make a decision that you actually think is stupid. That's not how I want to work."* (R1, 1:58).

When the organisation wanted to implement unisex toilets to break the shamefulness within the company and to be more inclusive for all kind of genders, R2 claimed that it has induced debates: *"And it was already like a discussion back and forth. And everyone had their own thoughts. So what we did is we put up memes. So, everyone was allowed to choose a meme who wasn't really comfortable with it, and put it in the bathroom in a joking way."* (R2, 2:38).

Furthermore, R4 mentioned that besides the open discussions, they were having brainstorming sessions as well: *"And of course we always have brainstorming sessions where we ask: "OK, what else can we do now? We need new limited editions, or what theme do we express ourselves on?", and then we usually come up with a rough idea that we then work out."* (R4, 4:15). This respondent was coded three more times under the frame of "open discussions":

"It's like a kitchen call here, that we communicate everything openly." (R4, 4:37)

"And then we sit down with her and there are usually five or six of us. That also happens in our office...we have an open space office. Then we all just slide together with the chairs." (R4, 4:23).

"When we really feel, I would say we sometimes have a feeling, that a topic is coming up, then we drop everything else and say: "Okay, we'll sit down together now". And then we discuss the topic first. Then we usually sit there for an hour or an hour and a half and think: "Okay, from what point of view are we looking at the whole thing now and what do we want to achieve with it anyway? What is our message behind it?" Because for us, the whole thing always has to be well thought through. It can't just be good wording, which might be funny, but which might not work on a second level, but it has to be aligned." (R4, 4:24)

In relation to internal open discussions, another code was defined as ***"Only inhouse communication"***. Hence, all statements were clustered which highlighted insights of the interviewed organisation's marketing creation, happening internally. This means they do not outsource their communication to agencies, or freelancers etc., which consequently would have influence on their communication outcomes. However, there were no comments of R2 and R5 found, which could be coded accordingly.

Starting with R4, who literally said*: "...why we are not working with agencies! Because nobody knows truefruits as well as we do! We are truefruits. We are truefruits' communication. We shape that too."* (R4, 4:12).

Again, R4 put emphasis on the importance of creating their communication inhouse: *"Then it's also often political issues. So it's really the case that when we manage an external campaign like this, we create it completely internally, i.e. really ourselves and not with some*

agency. That's what's really good for us, because no knowledge is getting lost, because in order to be able to speak skilfully on a topic, you first have to be an expert in the field yourself." (R4, 4:50).

Also, the first respondent pointed out the benefit of them making the decisions within their organisation only: *"...we simply decide: "Okay, are we behind it or not?" And that is actually clarified relatively quickly."* (R1, 1:35).

R3 mentioned: *"We can actually solve such things spontaneously very well. I think when you are in a corporation, the world looks very different, because there are very often loops, a hundred of loops. People have to approve this, approve that, approve everything before you have a good answer ready for social media. That would take far too long and I think they will have to prepare themselves completely differently for such circumstances."* (R3, 3:46).

Next, the quotes coded as ***"Competence based hierarchy"*** and ***"Specific department"*** will be illustrated. As both codes lead to the same outcome, namely that specific roles or competence teams can take decisions own their own, defined by their know-how, the origin of both is different. While "competence based hierarchy" was mostly coded when the respondent highlighted the value of the skills of the competence member(s), "specific department" was mainly referenced when those teams were just mentioned, without further qualifications.

R1 first said: *"...direction of a competence-based hierarchy. That means that not everyone always has a say in every little decision, but that actually everyone always knows who is well informed in which topics."* (R1, 1:57). She then also added: *"I'm not the smartest one here in the team, we're all smart in our different ways."* (R1, 1:59).

In addition, R3 highlighted the "on eye level approach" when she claimed: *"...but I would say that also happens in a non-hierarchical way, very easy and quick. But there are no complex structures or anything like that defined yet."* (R3, 3:60).

Regarding to R4's following quotes, her organisations have clearly defined competence teams, namely marketing department and community management. However, as she seems to have a different initial point, the researcher constructed another code (***"Specific department"***) for it.

Subsequently, her given information about it, is demonstrated here:

"Well, mostly all the communicative decisions are made in our marketing department." (R4, 4:19)

"That means that when such topics come up that we then comment on, in terms of communication. Then we actually only do it in Marketing. Unless it's something totally critical." (R4, 4:20).

"...the impulse usually comes from someone in marketing who has taken up the issue somewhere, regardless if he/she is in the management or our trainee." (R4, 4:22).

"We have our community management, the staff who writes the comments, even in normal situations just by themselves." (R4, 4:41).

However, the interviewees further mentioned a couple of times that for some decisions they would also ask for a final go from the management, or the management decides anyways. That is why the researcher clustered some statements under the code name ***"Including management"***.

Starting with R1, who, as a founder, has the "highest" position in the company, noticed: *"Maybe I also see my role in it a little bit... to support it, so we have situations from time to time where a staff member who is more socialised in a slightly different system says to me: "Hey Lisa, in the end you have to decide, you're the boss"."* (R1, 1:31).

R3 in contrast gave the insight that the management also takes decisions by on their own: *"We either write a mobile message, for example, or Kati and Christine decide directly. They are actually very, very involved, which is a bit unusual, because many Instagram accounts are operated by a social media team or the customer service team or something."* (R3, 3:67).

Also R3 explained: *"And then every idea that is bigger or that somehow moves in a socio-political... direction is discussed again with the management. Because that is also a very important part for us. Inga, Mark and Nick, our three founders, who have of course been with us since the beginning and are still very much involved, which of course makes a difference.*

Because they are still involved in everything and put their heart and soul into it but of course leave us our freedom, but still always support us. And especially with such difficult decisions, which we perhaps cannot simply make as employees, "do we really say anything about it now? Yes, because we often know that if we do something about it, there will follow shitstorm. We will definitely have people who will hate us and we know that if we have the founders' go, then it's okay if the shitstorm follows. Then we know: Okay, our three founders have also agreed and they're kind of fine with that too." (R4, 4:16). In another paragraph she also said: *"We think about it in small groups of five, I'd say, then the graphic designer gets right down to it, drops everything and writes the post. And then, before we present it to the management, we always have a complete concept."* (R4, 4:91).

Interestingly, the only respondent who was coded with **"Challenging internal status quo"** was R1. However, this could have been influenced by the fact that she is CEO and founder. She repeatedly said things like*: "But you should continuously question whether it's actually cool the way we do it."* (R1, 1:20), or: *"And then I started thinking about the "white saviour" complex. And I think it also came from the team, that someone said, I think we have to be really careful, let's rethink this! How do we have to communicate?"* (R1, 1:68)

Another statement which could have also been coded as "open discussions", is as follows*: "...that has of course led to the fact that we have a kind of culture where we are very open and can also exchange ideas well and can also be critical sometimes, because we all like each other so much that we don't have to be afraid that something bad will happen."* (R1, 1:60). However, it was coded as "challenging internal status quo" as it shows the trustworthiness in the team which gives the freedom to challenge each other and share opinions directly.

Consequently, the founder got challenged, too*: "Sometimes there is also a situation where I am also challenged in the team and someone says…"* (R1, 1:50).

In addition, as illustrated in the literature as well, the respondents referred to potential negative debates created by the consumers, which were taking into consideration when designing the activism practices. Thus, statements of especially R4, but also R1 and R3 are illustrated under the code name **"Evaluating possible reactions"** below:

"And then one of the team members said: That's cool, but only that we are aware of it. It's possible that people will come and hate us for inviting her." (R1, 1:63)

"Sometimes you are already a bit internally prepared for those comments. But generally speaking we are still in a very cool place I think. So with us, criticism is often explained that way or relatively factual or something." (R3, 3:42).

"Because we've talked everything through, and there's no catch to it, we're not getting ourselves into the jam with it." (R4, 4:28).

"So when we prepare a single social media post, which is just a post, we naturally go through it roughly in our heads, could something happen? What could the reactions be like? But then it's not the case that we write down an answer beforehand, and when the question comes, we have the answer ready. We rather do that if the situation comes." (R4, 4:40).

"We always say that even negative press is press and the more press, the better." (R4, 4:67)

"Okay, this and that will be coming soon, there will probably be several posts about it, there's a whole bottle for it in the shop or the posters are hanging in the cities", then we prepare ourselves more, then we prepare an FAQ [Frequently Asked Questions]. We think about what possible questions will come up or what possible insinuations will be made, and then we come up with a rough answer that fits that." (R4, 4:92)

Another thing which is mentioned repeatedly, is how much time and resources it costs to prepare content and actions regarding socio-political issues. This code was defined as: ***"Investing time and other resources".***

Especially R3 mentioned how time consuming it is, to advocate for topics which touches them: *"Because they (the two founders) really go deep, discuss very profound topics, invest a lot of time and energy and simply because it comes from heart, because it is so important to them."* (R3, 3:11). Further she said: *"So, I think that if you look at it from a KPI [Key Performance Indicator] point of view only, you would probably say, boor, I put too much time into it."* (R3, 3:61). So, they evaluated: *"Also, you need to decide if you want to spend your*

time with that in the end of the day and with whom to deal with, and with whom to discuss and with whom not." (R3, 3:63). Following she adds: *"So, it's simply a company decision to say, we also invest time in it because articles have to be well researched and well prepared. And just writing a post here and there, that doesn't work, because then you shoot yourself in the knee, then you'd better just leave it. As a company, you have to decide to say, I provide time or time resources or my people somehow get this and that on hand to do such things well."* (R3, 3:64)

In contrast, R5 argued why, according to him, they would not involve in activism too much: *"And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, because otherwise we wouldn't do anything else, or we wouldn't do anything else."* (R5, 5:16). He also adds a reasoning: *"We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism."*

Another code which was counted 13 times is **"Putting themselves into perspective"**. It was defined as it was noticed that the interviewees reflected their actions in regards to their own brand vision quite often. R1 for instance said: *"But you should continuously question whether it's actually cool the way we do it."* (R1, 1:20).

Further, R1 expressed multiple times how they would evaluate their actions:

"What is our role in the system? Does it actually make sense to grow at all or can't we do it much better in other forms of activism? And in that context, of course, I am, we are as a company, also very activist." (R1, 1:7).

"What is best for the impact and not what is the coolest or most exciting for me as a founder, although that often goes hand in hand." (R1, 1:10).

"...we always ask ourselves the question: "Does this make sense? Does this make sense for the impact? And does that make sense for us, and what kind of world we want to live in, and how does that fit together?" (R1, 1:55).

Also, she mentioned how her organisation would have to evaluate keeping their impact in balance with their business: *"And then it could happen that in one or two months we say we won't do it anymore. Because the disadvantages are greater than the advantages."* (R1, 1:28).

In contrast, R5 has not said anything regarding evaluating their actions. R2 and R3 were coded only once. Thus, R2 said: *"So we were wondering, perhaps, does this problem occur less with homosexuals or not? We were open to it. So then the idea popped up. Okay, perhaps we are very strong present in the channels were only heterosexual more heterosexual men are in."* (R2, 2:16).

Also responded three was referenced only once, when she questioned their operations by saying: *"Okay, this is a topic that I want to and can deal with, or is it really?"* (R3, 3:57)

R4 however, clearly pointed out how her organisation challenges itself, claiming: *"Then you always say "okay, do we think this is good enough that we would send it to our friends? Would you share with your best friends? Do you think this is funny enough or interesting or important that you would share the post and say hey look, we as truefruits just did something totally awesome, you have to check it out." And if that's not the case, if we don't get off on it, then we don't do it."* (R4, 4:10).

She further put emphasis on what each team member thinks personally when considering their organisation's campaigns with the following two statements:

"And in the end, however, the decision is being made by thinking: "What would we do as a private person now?" We think the action is right, we think the action is good. It doesn't matter if someone thinks we're greenwashing and posting this just to jump on the bandwagon. If we personally would post it and say okay, I think it's good, then we'll do it as truefruits too, no matter what kind of reactions will come." (R4, 4:27)

"And we never want to lose the fun of it. And that's how it is when we think about any Limited or so. If we don't have fun with any subject, then it's not a good one. We know that if we don't have fun with it, then we don't put love into it, then we don't put enthusiasm into it. Then we know that it won't be a round thing. And if it's not a round thing, then we don't publish it." (R4, 4:53)

Finally, R4 explained: *"We don't want to be "everybody's darling."* (R4, 4:68). Similarly, R1 also says: *"So we just say okay, we can't please everybody."* (R1, 1:42), which was additionally coded in "Evaluating possible reactions".

4.4 Theme 4: Implementation to take a stand

Since the process defined by Pimentel and Didonet (2021) includes content, formulation and implementation, the third will be illustrated next. Even though implementation is the action after the formulation, which is the main part in order to answer the research question, it still influences the decision making behind each stance taking. As presented in the literature review, the researchers Pimentel and Didonet have grounded the implementation on the marketing mix, namely price and product (in the sense of: "delivering value"), promotion (in the sense of: "communicating the value"), and finally place (in the sense of: channel). Their understanding is that brand activism involves in both, tangible and intangible commitments which call for more than advocating socio-political issues, but also taking actions to actively push for change. However, this belief is considered differently by other researchers. In contrast, according to Vredenburg et al. (2020), both tangible and intangible actions alone can be understood as brand activism, too. However, it is questionable whether it is still authentic or not. In regards to this, the conducted data was analysed and coded accordingly, so that 12 codes were developed from the raw data.
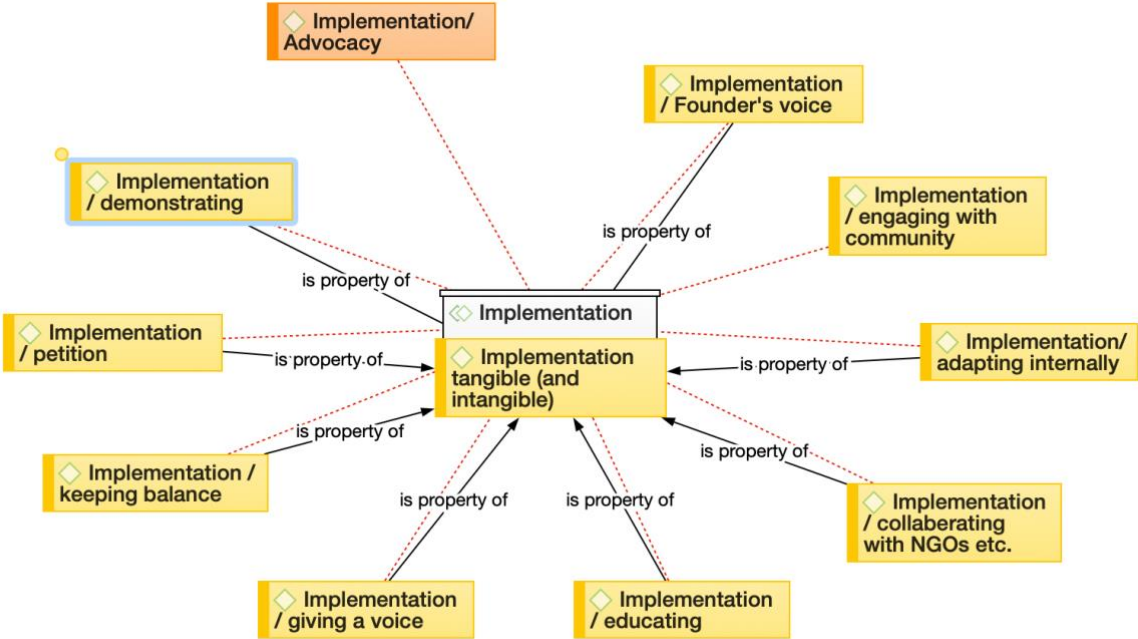

Figure 12: *Network: Implementation (Source: own illustration with Atlas.ti)*

With reference to the axis of brand activism developed by Vredenburg et al. (2020) (see figure 4 in chapter 2.2.2), there are four possible routes of brand activism: (1) by only practicing it, but not messaging about it, called silent brand activism; (2) by only messaging it, but not actively engaging in it, also named inauthentic brand activism; (3) by doing both, referred to as authentic activism; or (4) by not doing any of it, defined as absence of brand activism (Vrendenburg et al, 2020, p. 449). However, in literature there is no clear definition distinguishing between tangible brand activism and intangible brand activism (also named advocacy).

Therefore, the researcher referred the following codes as tangible implementation practices:

- "Implementation / demonstrating"
- "Implementation / educating"
- "Implementation / engaging with community"
- "Implementation / giving voice"
- "Implementation / petition"
- "Implementation / adapting internally"
- "Implementation / collaborating with NGO's"

In contrast, the code "Implementation / advocacy" only includes activism through messaging. The codes "Implementation / founder's voice" and "Implementation / keeping balance" do not give any indication and thus, stay neutral. By far the most occurred code was "Implementation tangible (and intangible)", but was mainly defined to distinguish from inauthentic brand activism. Since the second most occurred code is **"Implementation/ adapting internally"** and was referenced 17 times, it will be illustrated in the following.

R1, who was coded eight times, reported: *"Back then, we were very much focused on our clients and our producers in terms of benefiting from what we do. But at the end of the day, I believe that it can only be sustainable, so you can only be seriously sustainable as a company if you also manage to create a workplace that meets the same requirements as what you actually want to do along the value chain."* (R1, 1:5). Similar to this she said: *"One is, to establish value chains, or simply a way of doing business that benefits everyone. Both people who work for us here and people who work for us in our supply chains, as well as me as a founder. So, by that I don't necessarily mean just monetarily, but also as people, so to speak, finding fulfilment and*

of course also benefiting monetarily, but that it is simply a way of doing business everyone is benefitting from." (R1, 1:80). Furthermore, she literally stated how her organisation defined certain values which would guide their operations not only externally but also internally: *"That is to say, I think that with the CI [Corporate Identity] we also stated that we want to work not only externally but also internally with a certain image of humanity."* (R1, 1:71). Another example in terms of the before mentioned valued humanity, R1 explained a situation where they internally discussed whether it was still appropriate to call developing countries the same: *"Well, developing countries don't exist. And actually we don't want to use this term anymore."* (R1, 1:67). So, to show respect for the countries and the handicraft workers they collaborate with, they stopped using that term, both in internal and external communication.

In alignment to R1, R2 also referred to equal rights for all human, by saying: *"So as I said, here, even in the company we do accept and live by everyone has a right and everyone has the same rights, and it's all equal."* (R2, 2:36). Then, she added: *"So, even by being there at that demonstration, we're still not just demonstrating for the others, but we're also demonstrating for our friends at the company as well."* (R2, 2:37) Further, in connection to them advocating to normalise shameful gender stereotypical topics, she explained: *"Yes, and now all the bathroom stalls have, like, for example, female products, like tampons, and so on. Just to break it to be like: "Ah, okay, even in the men's store, there is something because sometimes it's full. So you end up going to the men's so which is no problem, but just to ease it a bit."* (R2, 2:13).

Also R3 was coded relatively often for implementing brand activism within their company, too. While they advocate for feminism and correspondingly women at work, and for family friendly working environment, they transferred their messaging into practise as well. To demonstrate, R3 stated: *"What feels very natural for us, does not feel the natural for everyone I think. And as I have already mentioned, we can work anywhere and anytime."* (R3, 3:18). She further explains what that means to her as an employee not having to decide whether she prioritises family or work, but to be able to succeed in both: *"And I believe that this is actually something that both employers and employees have to learn: to trust each other and to be able to make use out of that trust. So, for me it is really comfortable because, for example, I can easily pick up my daughter from school in the afternoon without feeling guilty. And when she sleeps I can sit down for an hour in the evening or I start to work very, very early in the morning*

sometimes or so. That allows me to be a team lead and be able to still manage to lead the area without having the feeling that something is falling behind." (R3, 3:19).

In consideration of the before mentioned advocacy practices of R4's organisation, she described their internal implementation as follows:

"So here (at truefruits) it's really the case that everyone can freely express their opinion and everyone can freely express their values. And that everything is actually in line with the values of the employees here, because that's what makes us special and, above all, because a lot of personality flows in here and it's not a predetermined line that has to be followed, but the opinion, no matter which employee it is, whether it's a trainee, an intern or a senior position, every opinion is equal and every personal value also counts here." (R4, 4:3)

"When we arrive on Mondays we are asked first how we are doing. "How was your weekend?" We always have a team chat on Mondays, where we ask everyone. "What did you do at the weekend? And what was the best thing you have eaten on the weekend?", and that makes everything very private, and we also talk about very private topics here, and I think that's how you don't get the feeling that you're new here, even as a new person. I think that's the most important thing, that we try to give everyone a platform and include them…" (R4, 4:98)

"…when we're sitting here in a meeting and we notice that someone maybe doesn't dare to say anything. Then we say, "Hey, Jana, why don't you tell us what you think about this? And that's important, because we don't have interns so that we can say we have interns, but so that they can be a real help for us. And for that they have to dare to express their opinion. It's all very, very personal here." (R4, 4:99)

In contrast, R5 did not make any statement to highlight their internal adaptation. However, one must keep in mind, that R5 mentioned before, that he does not want to lose too much time and resources on activism practises, as his organisation rather wants to actively make a change: *"Therefore, we also have a socio-political component and try to be active there, whereby water is a human right, of course. And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, because otherwise we wouldn't do anything else, or we wouldn't do anything else. We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful*

activism." (R5, 5:20). This further implements their approach of simply trying to make the world a better place, but focusing on the ones who need it most (people without access to drinking water).

To be highlighted, **"Implementation / advocacy"** was coded 6 times in total, but only two of the five respondents, namely R2 and R4 were referenced. This is because, R2 also described campaigns where she did not illustrate anything else but the messaging of a sensitive topic: *"So, we go offline, we have "out of home" campaigns as well. We had our "out of home" campaign in Berlin, we use actually the Berlin tower, and we did put a cricket. And we wrote: "Geh' steif!". So translated it would mean: "go hard.""* (R2, 2:24). Also the next statement of hers describes rather advocating behaviour: *"We're provocative, so we're really not scared to actually put ourselves out there and use provocative words."* (R2, 2:34). However, as mentioned earlier, concerning equality in sexuality they did indeed also adapted their messages into practice, both internally and externally.

R4 however, *"Another medium in our communication is poster campaigns. We have done a lot of it in the past. Where we have also expressed ourselves politically, I would say, and have strongly revealed our opinion. Of course, this creates different waves than when it's seen on a small bottle or on a social media post, when it hangs boldly in the middle of the city centre. But these are actually the platforms. So social media is always there!"* (R4, 4:34). Additionally, the fact that the respondent uses the verb "expressing" twice instead of wordings like "speaking up", "addressing", "educating", or even "advocating" shows a rather intangible activism approach: *"Yes, what is also an important platform for us is our bottle itself. We write new bottle texts on all our bottles every four weeks. Our bottle texts are our flagship. We have a lot of people sitting here who do nothing but writing texts all day. Of course, we also use the platform to express ourselves on important topics and not just for gimmicks. Just like our bottle as a limited edition. Of course, that needs a bit more lead time because the bottle has to get printed. But here, too, we sometimes express ourselves on important issues, including political issues and other things."* (R4, 4:33).

Also, relatively often assigned was the code **"Implementation / educating"** with a number of nine quotes. Noticeably and in contrast to the before mentioned code "Implementation/ advocacy", the opposite respondents were referenced as educational activists, namely R1, R3 and R5.

R1 for instance claimed by word: *"I do believe that we make people a bit smarter, I would say that."* (R1, 1:52). Later she gave an example by mentioning the "fair by law" initiative they called into life. With this, they encouraged their audience to sign a petition for a fairer supply chain law: *"And then we simply used the skills we had as Folkdays to bring a topic that is very unwieldy at first, namely supply chain law, closer to the general public."* (R1, 1:75). Therefore, they actually intended to not only educate but also to give their audience access to become active as well.

R3 mentioned in particular one initiative, where they actively tried to give women the right tools to reply accordingly when they were abused, offended or reduced by their gender: *"...we had a campaign for the "International Women's Day", where we thought, okay, a lot of people just go like this: "Okay, tell us your story, what happened to you? What happened to you unjustly? Or so... Then we thought okay, a hundred other channels do that too. We might think more ahead and then we came up with a campaign, where we recorded common prejudices against women and how you have a quick-witted answer to them. Because it is often the case that in that moment, you just let it go and later you think: "Boor, shit, I would have liked to have had a good answer, but didn't have one at the time." Then we thought okay, we'll give you a few answers. What kind of typical answers can you give? For example, (when someone says): "Women don't even want to be in leading positions or so". What is a good answer to that? And often you are not prepared and we thought...it was actually very well received"* (R3, 3:40).

Lastly, R5 made a statement, which was already mentioned earlier where he referred to the campaign "water is a human right" which literally calls people for action and sets awareness to the issue (R5, 5:20).

In comparison, the remaining codes were referenced five up to five times only and will therefore be illustrated in the table below:

Implementation/ founder's voice	
R1	**Code**

"I do an Instagram Live format where I talk to different port leaders about different topics that go beyond Folkdays." (R1, 1:43)	Implementation / giving a voice; Implementation Founder's voice;
R2	**Code**
As referred to the two founders, Kati and Christine: *"But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something. And Christine and Kati cover a lot of different topics in our (Instagram) stories, that's a little bit like…you know, the stories are just a bit more free and independent compared to our other channels."* (R3, 3:27)	Implementation/ educating; Implementation tangible and/or intangible; Implementation/ founder's voice
Implementation/ giving a voice	
R1	**Code**
"Lisa also talks to Kübra, who wears a headscarf, and approaches the subject a little differently." (R1, 1:66)	Implementation / Founder's Voice; Implementation/ founder's voice
Implementation/ keeping the balance; **Implementation/ collaborating with NGO's etc.**	
R1	**Code**
"And at the same time, of course, it's clear that we still have to pay the people here so well that they don't work here in an exploitative way, just so that we can buy more products from the local people." (R1, 1:24)	Implementation/ keeping the balance; Implementation tangible and/or intangible;
R3	**Code**
"But in the end, we also sell products, so to speak, so you have to create a bit of a balance. What are our topics and which are not? (R3, 3:58)	Implementation/ keeping the balance;

"So where we really get involved as Ooia, it's mostly with topics that just go very well with us. Well, we work together with the CIJ, it's the "Center For Intersectional Justice". A lot of it deals with feministic issues. We also collaborated with "Wash United", it was about period poverty and so on." (R3, 3:31)	Implementation/ keeping the balance; Implementation/ collaborating with NGO's etc.
R5	**Code**
"We are an NGO, we care about water as a human right. Therefore, we also have a socio-political component and try to be active there, whereby water is a human right, of course. And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, because otherwise we wouldn't do anything else…"	Implementation/ keeping the balance; Implementation/ collaborating with NGO's etc.
Implementation/ engaging with community	
R2	
"...struggle with something like an erection really makes them feel like they are not part of the community, like they are excluded from the people around them, that they're different, that they're disconnected. So with GoSpring, we actually want to make those men feel like it is okay to be different. And that there are solutions to it." (R2, 2:4)	Implementation internally and/or externally; Implementation / engaging with community; Industry Environment
"We had stickers which said: "you are beautiful", "you are hot", "you are a sex god in your own way"." (R2, 2:18)	Implementation internally and/or externally; Implementation / engaging with community
Implementation/ demonstrating	
R2	
"So which is why we decided to go to the Christopher Street Day in Cologne, and we had a truck and we tried to make it funny. And because we put on as a big sign on our truck reports: "Let's make erections great again!" And on the other side, we had the writing of: "Everyone deserves	Implementation / demonstrating; Implementation internally and/or externally

love equality and erections!" So the Christopher Street Day is a demonstration for the rights and equality of homosexual people in Germany, which is why we wanted to support that, but we still wanted to add a message here and say: "Hey, you all deserve love. You all deserve equality, but you all deserve erections as well, because this is another taboo which needs to be broken." (R2, 2:17)	
"Like, for example, the Christopher Street Day. So, we are we are invested in this and we live by this even our company, so everyone, regardless of your sexuality is part of it." (R2, 2:22)	Authentic activism; Implementation/ adapting internally; Implementation internally and/or externally; Implementation / demonstrating;
Implementation/ petition	
R1	**Code**
"I mean, we have, or I have, but also with Folkdays, and also of course with a lot of support from the team, we have started this campaign "fair by law". In the end, we wanted to push the government to pass a supply chain law three years ago. That is activist."	Implementation / petition; Implementation tangible and/or intangible;
"I don't know to what extent our producers will notice that we have fought for a supply chain law and so on." (R1, 1:53)	Authentic activism; Effects incl. scope; Macro+ Industry environment / Not influenced; Implementation/ petition

Table 8: Data analysis on Theme 4 - Implementation to take a stand

5 Discussion of the findings

This research investigates the internal processes of organisations taking a stand on socio-political issues. As previously stated, the research question is:

How do companies organise themselves around the process of making a stand on socio-political issues?

Based on the main question, these propositions have been formulated while researching in order to support the consistent line of reasoning:

- RP 1: *The socio-political concerns the organisation's address are based on the brand's values.*
- RP 2: *Companies follow an action plan when developing activism initiatives.*
- RP 3: *Companies are willing to make a stand, implement their brand activism practises authentically.*

Grounded on both, the in-depth data analysis in the previous chapter and the theoretical knowledge illustrated in the literature review, this chapter will use the collected data and qualitative findings to support or discard the established propositions with the final aim to answer the research question. To be consistent, the order of the proposition statements is aligned with the main themes. Correspondingly, proposition 1 deals with the brand characteristics and impulses to take a stand, analysed in the two first main themes; proposition 2 refers to the formulation which was outlined in chapter 4.3; and lastly, proposition 3 invests in the process of implementing brand activism (chapter 4.4) authentically, meaning to combine messaging and practise.

5.1 RP 1: *The socio-political concerns the organisation's address are based on the brand's values.*

Taking the literature review into consideration, the brand's purpose is formed by its deepest values, and along with the company's culture it provides direction and guidance to their actions (Kapferer, 2012, p. 150; Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2002. P 47; Nandan, 2005, p. 266). In the conducted interviews, the five respondents offered extensive insights about their companies' culture, their values, and purpose. Further, in the implementation analysis part the respondents illustrate their activism actions. Thus, in the following both, the values defined by the company, and their brand activism practises can be compared to later refer to the first proposition.

First of all, the key points of each respondent's purpose statement, previously outlined in table 4 of chapter 4.1, will be summarised in table 9 below. In turn, this will help to track consistency in the companies' activism activities.

Respondent	
R1	→ Doing business that benefits all stakeholders, especially throughout the whole supply chain.
R2	→ Giving men serenity to overcome their health challenges with ease. → Enabling them to feel belonging to society (again).
R3	→ three pillars: (1) social change: a) products that make a difference that somehow make someone's life better; b) stimulate social discourse; (2) economic profitability; (3) family-friendly work.
R4	"true fruits, no tricks" → standing for their honesty in terms of messaging, but also qualitative product development → freedom of free speech and opinion (which was referenced 12 times)
R5	"water is a human right" → changing the world with joyful activism

Table 9: Summary of respondent's purpose statements

Moreover, as outlined in the data analysis, all companies engaged in some kind of stance taking referring to a socio-political issue. While, R1's purpose is to create a better working environment for all people involved in their business, she clearly demonstrates how her company bases their actions accordingly. First of all, they successfully pushed the government to implement a fairer supply chain law, which did not bring any benefit to their profits, but corresponds to a better working life for their suppliers along the value chain. Secondly, she repeatedly mentions how the organisation will create a better working environment in their German office as well. For instance, she claimed: "*I actually want to create a workplace where the people who come here feel comfortable, are able to be their selves and hopefully also develop on a personal level.*" (R1, 1:14). Based on the code "Implementation/ adapting

internally", there were eight out of 20 statements made by the respondent 1, which confirmed that what the company advocates for externally, is also lived internally. This however, shows a high level of coherence regarding the first research proposition.

In addition, R2 presents a good example of confirming the first proposition, as their whole business strategy is based on effective medical solutions for men's healthcare concerns. It is to mention that they were coded seven times for adapting their activism practises within their organisation, too. To illustrate, when they noticed that they would reach only six percent of the ten percent homosexual men in their market, they were encouraged to reach the missing four percent by demonstrating with them at the biggest equal demonstration in Germany. Also, they did not only show support by participating with 20 of their employees, but also gave homosexuals a voice by breaking the shamefulness for taboo topics, like homosexuality or erectile dysfunction. Therefore, their defined value of supporting men to feel like belonging to society, no matter which health issues they face, or which sexual orientation they have, can certainly be found in their actions.

When looking at the values claimed by R3, it can be seen that their business strategy is based on fulfilling their purpose throughout the line. R3 declared two important approaches her organisation follows to push for change: First, by stimulating social discourse in terms of educating about certain topics regarding feminism, and second, by encouraging a trustful working environment to allow family friendly work without compromising a career. During the interview, she stated: *"So there are certain values that guide us how we work and how we treat each other. I would say that it is lived (implemented) very well."* (R3, 3:22). So according to their values, their activism is lived within the organisation and further practiced outside the organisation, too.

Also R5 shows consensus with their activism practises and their brand values. As they describe their purpose as *"changing the world in a positive, joyful and loving way"* while they provide drinking water to people without access to it, there can be no argument found to discard proposition 1. Especially when taking into consideration that they campaign with the slogan "water is a human right", their business, their values and their activism, all approve that the issues they address are based on their brand's identity.

In contrast, R4's organisation follows a different approach of communicating their values with consumers. As the respondent explains, that the slogan "true fruits, no tricks" guides them to not take themselves too seriously, but to always take their product quality very seriously, this leads to the conclusion that their communication practises should be considered with a sort of humour. However, other than that, the researcher found it quite hard to understand their purpose and motivation behind their doings. Another statement of R4, which the researcher understood as a sort of value, was: *"But the main thing for us is just to have fun."* (R4, 4:87), which again, would complement their approach of spreading humour, but by addressing political topics, indeed. However, it could not be noticed that the organisation follows any line, regardless from not being minced, that give hints which concerns they focus on in their activism practices. As mentioned in the literature review and defined by Kotler and Sarkar (2017), there are six area of concern which can get addressed to when engaging in brand activism. However, it is unclear to the researcher how the organisation decides what to advocate for, only by having values of "being true" and "having fun". The researcher rather understands their so defined values as a tone of voice, than being a tool to guide decisions. In short, when communicating about sensitive topics like the Istanbul convention, funny wording may make some people laugh, but does not show any alignment between the issue which is being addressed and their value of having fun or being honest.

The information gathered during the data analysis phase, therefore, allows the confirmation of the first proposition.

5.2 RP 2: *Companies follow an action plan when developing activism initiatives.*

To begin with, none of the respondents were confirming this proposition statement, nor were following a similar four steps as outlined in by Farinalla (2021) in chapter 2.2.2 in the literature review. However, only R4 described their process as kind of routine they usually would follow.

To illustrate, R1 for instance responded that they would decide in the team which issues they would be addressing and which they would not. This can be further confirmed by the fact that R1 was referenced most, namely 11 out of 18 times, with the code "Open discussions" from the code group "Formulation". All the examples she brought up when having to make a decision were either been made in alignment with the team, or were assigned to competence leaders. As competence based hierarchy was mentioned twice by R1. Even if a decision was based on true facts, like when she said: *"Because the disadvantages are greater than the advantages.",* she stated that those determinations were also discussed *"openly in the team"*

(R1, 1:28). However, open discussions too, were being based on their internal values and beliefs. Due to the fact that they get challenged within the team, it seems like they are quite reflective. For instance, they were discussing whether they should call "developing countries" differently, in order to distinguish themselves from the "white saviour" complex. This leads to the conclusion that they are interested and informed about socio-political happenings, which firstly reduces the complexity of the process, and secondly, allows faster decisions, as they do not have to align on the level of knowledge to much. This is referenced for example by R1 saying: *"So when an urgency is brought to us from outside, we simply decide: "Okay, are we behind it or not?" And that is actually clarified relatively quickly. So there are rarely any discussions."* (R1, 1:35). Also, they have ready-made tools defined through which they spread their activism communication, like the Instagram live format, which is held by the founder (R1). Through this channel, she talks to different "port leaders" about topics that also go beyond her organisations main themes. When talking about it, she further gave an example of them as a team "evaluating possible reactions" (code), because a planned discussion member was wearing a headscarf. However, the response to it was that no matter what religion, skin colour, etc. she had, they would always talk to people who can share knowledge and encourage social discourse. Lastly, it can be said, that they certainly do not mention to base their decisions on profit outcomes, or other goals as normally defined in action plans.

In contrast, as described by R2, when they noticed a potential new customer base, namely four percent of homosexual men on the market, which they did not reach at that point. Therefore, R2 explained, they looked for ways to approach them and decided to participate on the biggest German equal rights demonstration. However, this does not mean that they did not participate by true support, but mainly shows that they strive to grow their business while advocating for social change. Nevertheless, R2 claimed that even when they would get bad reviews for their activism initiatives, they would not delete or comment on it, as they believe in the freedom of speech and opinion. When talking about how they implemented their activism message inside their company, R2 explained how they gave a platform to express opinions and included the employees in the process of changing into unisex toilets. This was being done by letting them stick printed memes to help overcoming shamefulness and breaking the ice for taboo topics. However, the respondent was only referenced once, when saying they were having open discussions to decide for their activism practises.

The third respondent also did not mention any action plans in terms of defining steps and/or an aspired outcome, like growing their business or increasing their awareness regarding their target audience. When taking into account R3's referenced codes of the code group "implementation", it can be seen that there was no quote assigned to "open discussions". Nonetheless, she described her company following a competence hierarchy approach, where people follow their own responsibilities. Whenever they are influenced by one of the defined environments, she explains: *"We either write a mobile message, for example, or Kati and Christine decide directly."* (R3, 3:67). Therefore, the code "including management" was defined, which R3 was referenced one out of five times, meaning the average number of outcome. However, the respondent amplified that different to other organisations, the two founders would lead the Instagram channel themselves and can accordingly react to inquiries directly. Finally, criticism only happens very hardly she said, which therefore rarely has to be taken into account when planning their activism initiatives.

Similar to R3, respondent 4 reported her organisation having three specific departments for each of their competences, namely marketing, sales, and business operations. Interestingly, R4 is the only respondent referring to brand activism practises being defined by a marketing team (R4, 4:20). Unless it was something "totally critical" like a "shitstorm", she explained. R4 portrayed their brand activism formulation in depth: They first get the impulse from someone in the marketing team, who whenever when having an idea shares it openly with the team. In response, they would come together as the entire marketing team and discuss the idea, while they consider negative reactions and develop a draft for a potential Instagram post just in the moment. For that, they write hashtags, claims and the caption and create the image. Due to the fact that they have content writers, and a graphic designer in-house, these steps are done very quickly. After having created a finished draft, they send it into the companywide chat and await feedback. If feedback is being made within the next 15 minutes, it will be considered, if not, she said, they post it anyways. This highlights the importance of firstly, in-house competences which are needed when messaging activism, and secondly, well-established internal communication. In contrast to the other respondents however, R4's organisation clearly differentiates by having a strongly provocative communication. This forces them to always consider possible reactions when publishing their socio-political statements. This, even if R4 did not define her company following an action plan, evaluating possible reactions beforehand will never be neglected, she said. Later, she added how much bigger political correctness got over the past years and that they cannot be as provocative as they were in their earlier years.

Finally, R5 did not have anything to say regarding an action plan too, but only mentioned how most of their employees were previously working for NGO's which leads to the conclusion of having quite a positive impact in their companies' culture. This might be important to stimulate activism and correspondingly drive motivation within the team. However, there is nothing to say about their internal process behind it.

The information gathered during the data analysis phase, therefore, does not allow the confirmation of the second proposition.

5.3 RP 3: *Companies who are willing to make a stand, implement their brand activism practises authentically.*

As outlined in chapter 2.2.2 in the literature review, authentic brand activism can only be accomplished when the brand's messaging concerning socio-political issues does also align with the brand's purpose, their values, and their corporate practice (Vredenburg's et al., 2020, p. 445). In that sense, intangible commitments take place through communicating (messaging) controversial socio-political concerns. Whereas, tangible commitments for instance, support employees through organisational policies and modifications to corporate practice, or other stakeholders for example through partnerships or monetary donations aimed to facilitate socio-political causes (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 448; Wettstein and Baur, 2016, p. 211).

In the following, the implementation of the five firms of which the researcher interviewed either the communication manager, or the CEO's/founders will be demonstrated in the axis "typology of brand activism", created by Vredenburg et al. (2020, p. 449) (see chapter 2.2.2). According to the authors, in order to engage in truly authentic activism, the actions must reveal "symmetry and match between their purpose, values, messaging, and practice" (p. 449).

The discussion of the findings referring to the above mentioned proposition, can mainly be based on table 5 of chapter 4.1. In correspondence, in the previously outlined axis defined by Vredenburg et al. each respondent's activism typology will be presented under the evaluation of the researcher of the collected interview data (see figure 13 below).

Considering all statements in regards to their activism practises, which were being made by R1, they contributed by far to the most authentic approach. This can especially be proven by statements like: *"I don't know to what extent our producers will notice that we have fought for a supply chain law and so on."* (R1, 1:53), which was referenced with the code "authentic activism", as it confirms their authenticity in one statement only. In regard to the proposition

before, this statement shows a high level of authenticity, because they pushed the government to change the law in favour for their suppliers, detached from any positive financial outcome, nor any appreciation by their supply chain partners. Similar to R1, R3 also follow a highly authentic brand activism. As outlined before their business decisions are always guided by three pillars they have defined. When comparing their three pillar approach with the literature of authentic brand activism, it can be noticed that on top of committing to both, messaging and practise like defined in the first pillar, the third pillar additionally asks for internal integration for social change (R3, 3:5). However, when considering all statements made by the other respondents, R1, R2 (and R5) also check all of the three pillars mentioned by R3, but based on individually defined values. Therefore, it was derived that four out of five respondents were identified as authentic brand activists. Nevertheless, it is to be mentioned that R5 put emphasis on not calling his organisation a brand, nor being committed to activism messaging too much (R5, 5:16). He pointed out that it was far to time consuming and would "hinder" them from their true purpose of "joyful activism" (R5, 5:19). In addition, R3 repentantly claimed how time- and energy investing their commitment to activism would be. This further got developed into a code, included in the code group "formulation", which R3 was referenced with four out of six times (3:11; 3:61; 3:63; 3:64). However, she clearly highlights that the founders would mainly do it by their deepest inner belief: *"Because they (the two founders) really go deep, discuss very profound topics, invest a lot of time and energy and simply because it comes from heart, because it is so important to them."* (3:11). This again, shows the authenticity by intrinsically and truly committing to brand activism actions. Additionally, R1 states that they put a lot of energy into the "fair by law" campaign (R1, 1:80).

As stated before, also R2 showed authentic brand activism commitments, by messaging and practicing in alignment to their values. Further, as mentioned by the respondent, they did not only demonstrate for equal rights for potential consumers or society in general, but also for their colleagues and everyone who deserves to love (2:8). Anyways, the reason why they are illustrated much lower in the axis in table 8 is that this was the first and rather recent (September 2021) initiative. Thus, this leaves room for more activism practises in the future.

Finally, R4 is the only respondent for which the third proposition statement has to be discarded, as their messaging does not get further grounded by aligned practises. Even though they address topics like "freedom of speech" and correspondingly initiate their employees to speak up and share their opinion, this seems to be not in line with what they are messaging.

When messaging about highly political topics, like the Istanbul convention or the refugee crisis, they could do so much more than only talking about it, but rather educating through their platforms, or donating money. Especially when considering them being the market leaders in the German smoothie industry (4:57).
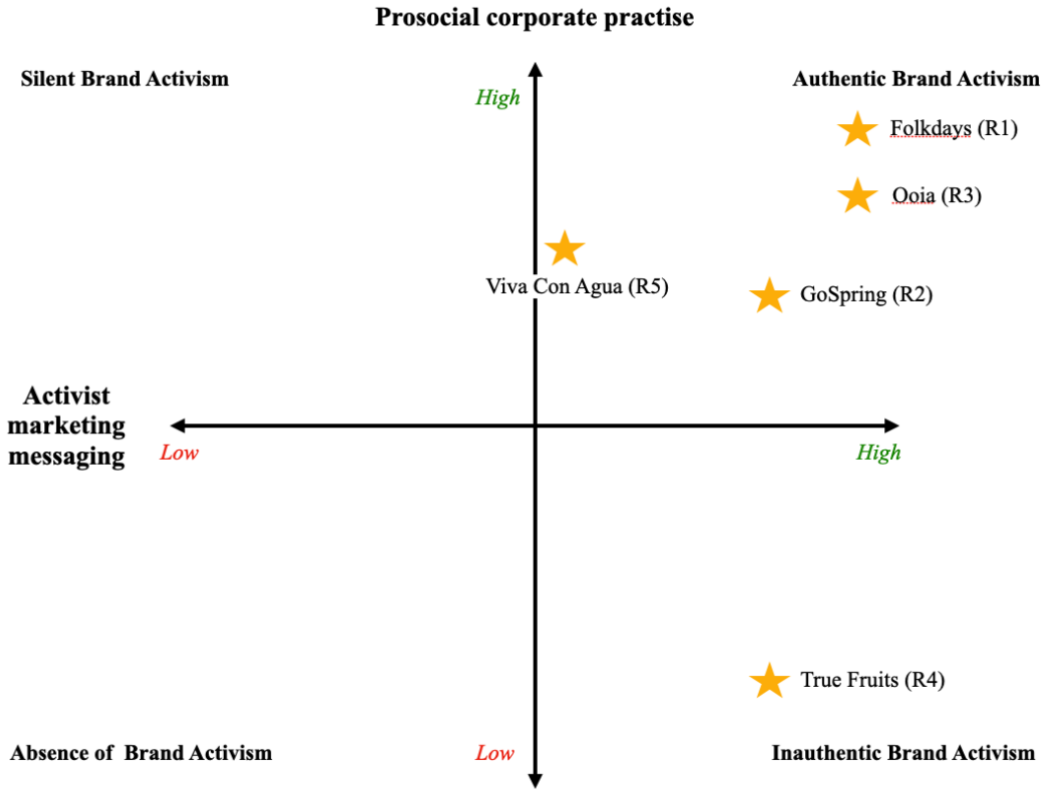

Figure 13: Typology of brand activism of interview respondents (own illustration)

The information gathered during the data analysis phase, therefore, does not allow full confirmation the third proposition.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Résumé of the findings

Brand activism has been identified as a business approach going beyond previously known CSR commitments and effecting the organisations by internal positive outcomes, so as pushing for change within society, too. Many authors have been outlined in the literature review, which all view the phenomenon of taking a stand from different angles. Therefore, this study has been shaped from various perspectives, coming to the conclusion that the authors Vredenburg et al. (2020) provided the most suitable model to this research, with a clear definition to the approach, while distinguishing authentic brand activism, from inauthentic-,

silent- or absent commitment, as demonstrated under the third proposition. Moreover, as the researcher has only found one reference which enlightens the internal processes of brand activism, this thesis was further grounded on Pimentel's and Didonet's (2021) findings.

To begin with the impulses to brand activism, the conducted data leads to the conclusion that none of the impulses can be fully detached from the companies' identity. To concretise, whenever the organisation gets triggered, no matter if from company-, industry- or macro environment, brand purpose and values will always be considered as guiding factors. All of the respondents clearly highlighted the fact that they would always base their decisions on the core identity which gives implications to which extent messaging and practicing would align to their values. So, regardless of advocacy or activism commitments, all decisions are grounded by the brand's identity. As stated by the respondents, having defined a company's purpose additionally leads to much faster decision making, and also allows more individual decision making. This has further been mentioned by one of the respondents, calling it competence-based hierarchy approach, but was clearly also described by two other respondents as well. Whenever a topic came up, which was rather controversial, there was a rich tendency of the respondents to either discuss it openly in the whole team, or to include the management in the formulation of brand activism. However, even though the decision making was described as quite a fast process, the preparation to implement was said to be rather time-and energy consuming. Additionally, it has to be mentioned that, as described in proposition 2, there was usually no inspired outcome defined in terms of increasing brand awareness, or other brand performance measures. None of the respondents mentioned they would be practicing brand activism to improve the brand's reputation. On the contrary, all of the respondents described their actions being supported by deeply inner beliefs and emotions. Another aspect which influenced the process of brand activism formulation, was that most of the respondents said to have the company's communication being operated in-house. This again, makes the process less complex and much faster, which is especially important when taking stances for/against socio-political topics being brought up from external environments, and thus often asks for a quick response. Also, it allows greater control and generates more authentic outcomes when being prepared within the organisation only. Furthermore, evaluating possible reactions played a major role to one respondent in specific. However, all of the respondents again pointed out that they would recall their values to guide them when considering controversial reactions by consumers in advance. Interestingly, the vast majority of the respondents showed a high level of reflection, while repentantly question their actions to be good enough, or not. Especially one of the respondents

continuously described her team as communicating very openly by challenging each other and challenging the organisation's actions constantly.

Further, how they were implementing the brand activism initiatives were portrayed very differently by the respondents, but the messaging was mostly communicated via the social media platform Instagram. The researcher came to the conclusion, that this was probably caused by allowing quick responses to occurring occasions and lead to less steps in preparation which makes it much more efficient for the organisations to take public stances. Furthermore, different ways of implementing their socio-political stances were being analysed, which resulted in a number of six ways to practise brand activism outside the organisation, while demonstrating; set awareness for changing a law via petition; giving minorities a voice by engaging into dialogue; collaborating with NGOs, educating society by evoking discourse; or engaging with community. Another tangible practice of brand activism was to adapt those practises internally, which in turn with regards to the literature should lead to a better understanding of the values within the company and therefore improves the outcomes of the employees when activism practises are lived within the organisation, too.

All this leads to the initial aim to answer the following research question:
How do companies organise themselves around the process of making a stand on socio-political issues?

This question however, does not imply for a concrete action plan, but gives guidance to successfully implement brand activism within organisations. Further, it shows the importance of truly believing in what is being practised, as a lack of passion might lead to unsatisfying results. Also, as mentioned by the respondents truly authentic brand activism demands a lot of time and energy, which should always be taken into consideration when committing to it. However, none of the respondents followed a previously defined action plan but all of them followed their intuition to engage in brand activism actively. Finally, it can be concluded that there are no common approaches which are being implemented when committing to brand activism but taking the company values as a guidance for all decisions.

6.2 Practical implications

Hence, this thesis provides an insight of the process behind organisation's taking a stand, it may give some practical implications for companies which want to commit to brand activism as well. Therefore, it firstly can be said that organisations should define reasonable brand values

which are in alignment of their brand operations, namely the products or service they offer. When looking at the findings from the conducted interviews, four out of five respondents related their brand activism topics with their core business, which complements one another and helps to reduce complexity and gives a more consistent picture to the consumers. This was found to be relatively important as the four respondents basing their brand activism on their core business rarely mentioned to having to deal with any complaints or criticism. Further, respondents emphasised the fact that they would share the organisation's values as a private person, too. This again, leads to the conclusion that the communication should be operated in-house and not be outsourced when engaging in brand activism messaging.

Lastly, it can be said that from the conducted interview data learnings can be taken into consideration, but as the number of respondents was limited, there cannot be given a best practise road map at this point.

6.3 Future research

The present research can be further explored through a set of distinct future directions:

- The data collected in the sampled companies can be completed with other sources of information such as participant-observation, specifically to observe their decision-making process *in situ*.
- Brand activism practices tend to evolve rapidly, so additional data should be available to do a follow-up data collection to investigate which central and distinctive aspects on brand activism practices will change over time and which will endure.
- The proposed analysis can also be extended to other companies and thus widen the sample.
- A comparative study with other companies from different geographies could also yield some interesting insights, by adding the contextual culture layer.

Although aware of the immense path forward, I do believe that this research has laid down some initial insights and unveiled some central aspects on how companies organise themselves around the process of making a stand on socio-political issues.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Company Information - Folkdays (R1: Lisa Jaspers)

In the following, it shows how Folkdays describes themselves on their website:

About FOLKDAYS

Jewellery, accessories, interior, garments
Handmade, sustainable, fair trade
With emphasis on distinctive design and natural materials

FOLKDAYS is a Berlin-based brand for contemporary fair trade design and fashion, founded by Lisa Jaspers in 2013.

We offer sustainable jewellery, accessories, interior products and garments created by independent artisans, small family businesses, and local fair trade organisations throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America. With a focus on the use of natural materials, all of these products are handmade and fair trade. Each piece is truly one of a kind and destined for 'forever favourite' status in your home or wardrobe. In doing so, the claim is to create timeless and distinctive products – favourite pieces for eternity.

FOLKDAYS takes a collaborative, strength-based design approach which combines the knowledge and expertise of all participants within the framework of co-creation processes; one which is inspired equally by centuries-old handicraft techniques, local materials as well as decidedly contemporary design influences. We work exclusively with producers and companies that are also committed to the values of social entrepreneurship. To create fair conditions of purchase, our current partners calculate the prices themselves. Learn more about this here.

Since autumn 2020 we have been offering a curated B2B range of handmade, fair trade jewellery, accessories and interior products in cooperation with El Puente, the pioneer of the fair trade movement in Germany. More about FOLKDAYS x El Puente here; here you can also find our B2B shop for German and European retailers.

We see ourselves not only as a business, but also as advocates for change on a political level. We want our work to contribute to making global trade fairer and have therefore campaigned for a law that holds companies liable for what happens in their supply chains as part of the #fairbylaw petition.

Source: https://folkdays.com/pages/the-idea
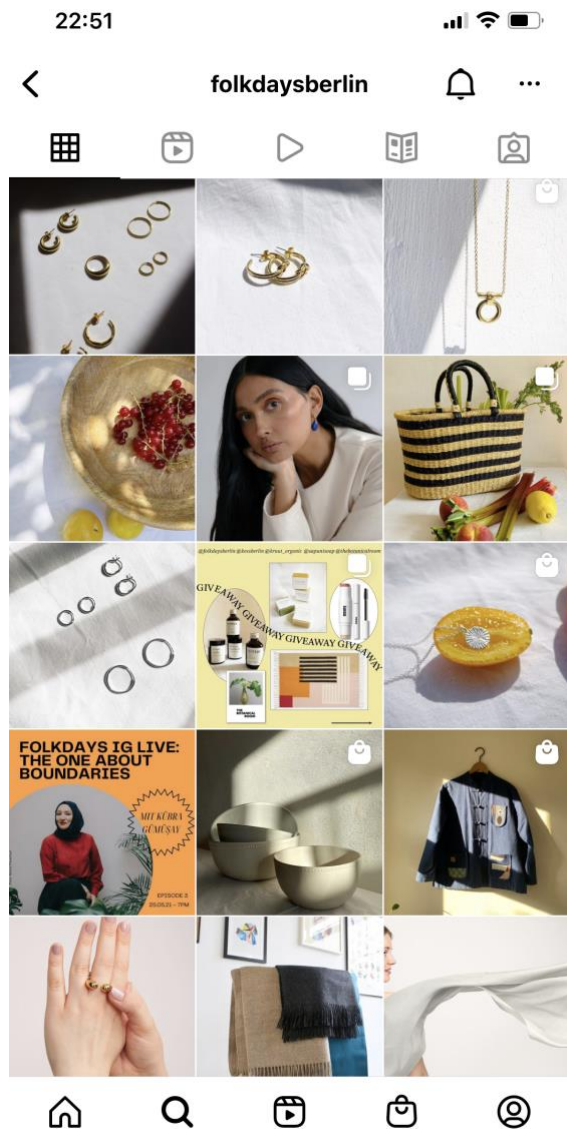
(Source: Instagram folkdaysberlin)

Appendix B: Company Information – GoSpring (R2: Jessica Ashba)

Below GoSpring's "about us" is being illustrated, saying:

"Spring connects. With doctors. With pharmacies. Spring is for men.

We combine medical expertise into a platform that offers men around-the-clock advice and treatments for issues that are often put off, but can be easily solved. You'll find these simple solutions at Spring.

All treatment plans are reviewed by leading German doctors and only medications approved in Germany are prescribed." *(Source: https://www.gospring.de/ueber-uns)*
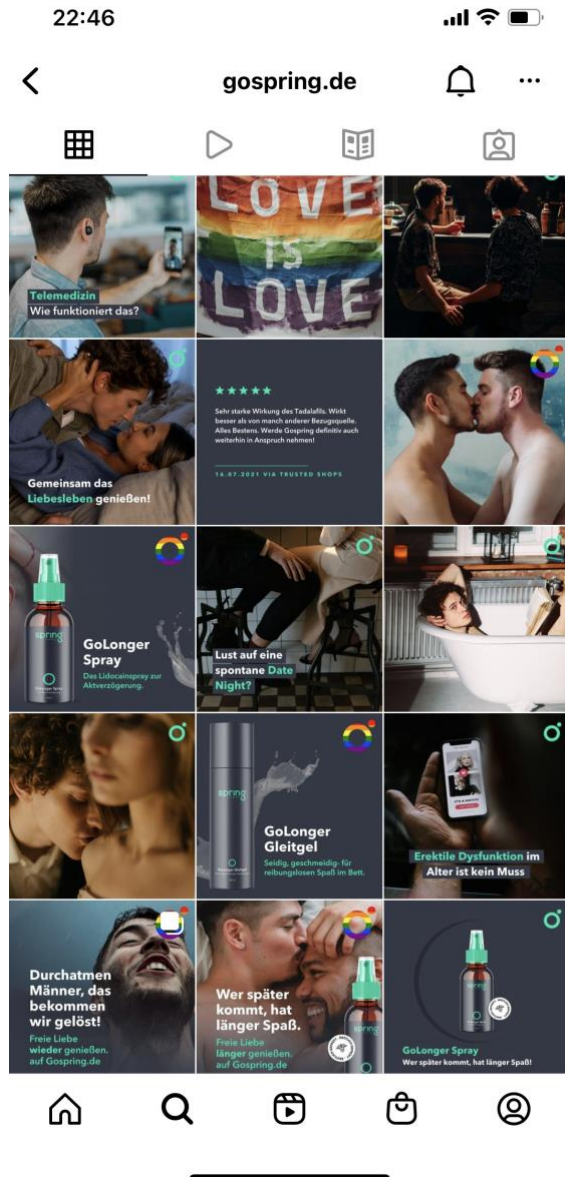
(Source: Instagram gospring.de)

Appendix C: Company Information – Ooia (R3: Katrin Engel)
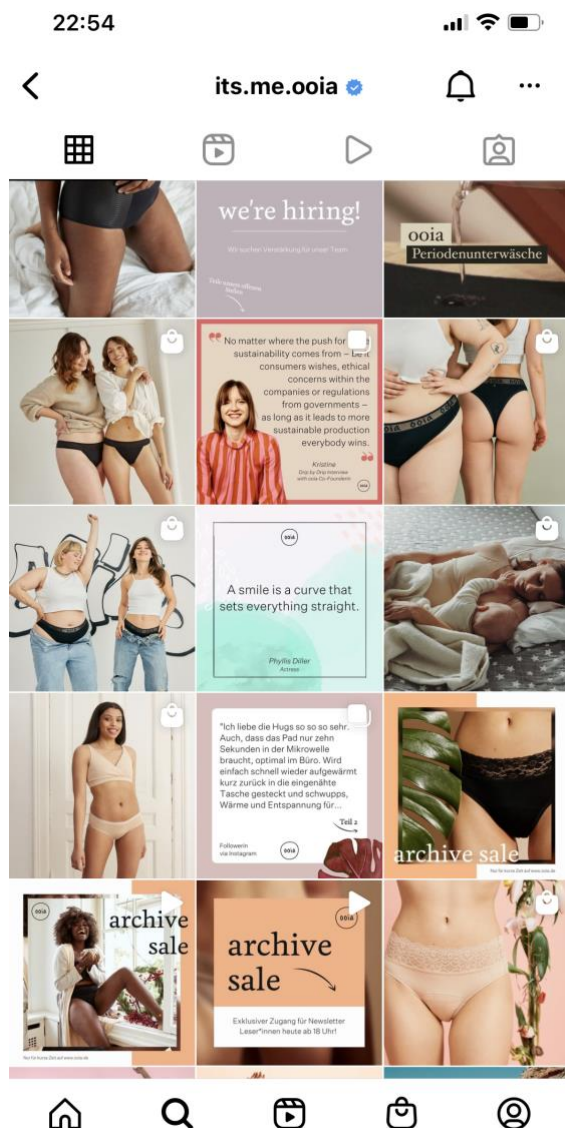
That is what Ooia says about their social engagement: "Female Empowerment is the central mission of ooia. Our product contributes to this mission by enabling people to manage their periods more comfortably. But we strive to achieve more and therefore support various initiatives that promote gender equality and female empowerment."

(Source: Instagram its.me.ooia)

Appendix D: Company information – True Fruits (R4: Anna Mehlem)

Here is what true fruits says in their "about us" section:

"true fruits – no tricks

Egal wo Du bist: Ob beim Robodance im Club, schwitzend in der Sauna, alleine im verlassenen Büro oder einfach nackt zu Hause. true fruits macht es Dir leicht, Dich gesund und einfach zu ernähren. Kein lästiges Obstschälen etc. – das erledigen wir für Dich. true fruits ist eine inhabergeführte Edelsaftschmiede aus Bonn, kein Konzern. Unser Herz hängt daran. Von drei Freunden 2006 gegründet, sind wir branchenfremd und mit Null Knete gestartet. Mittlerweile sind wir 31 Gefährten und ziehen unser Ding durch. Dank der Menschen, die hochwertige Lebensmittel schätzen, gehören wir mittlerweile sogar schon zu den Marktführern. Wir sind stolz darauf, ein bisschen anders zu sein und leben das schamlos aus. Wir sind true, leben streng nach dem Prinzip no tricks und nehmen uns selbst nicht so ernst. Wir sind ein kleiner aber feiner Saftladen. Nicht mehr, aber eben auch nicht weniger." *(Source: https://true-fruits.com/leitgedanken#)*
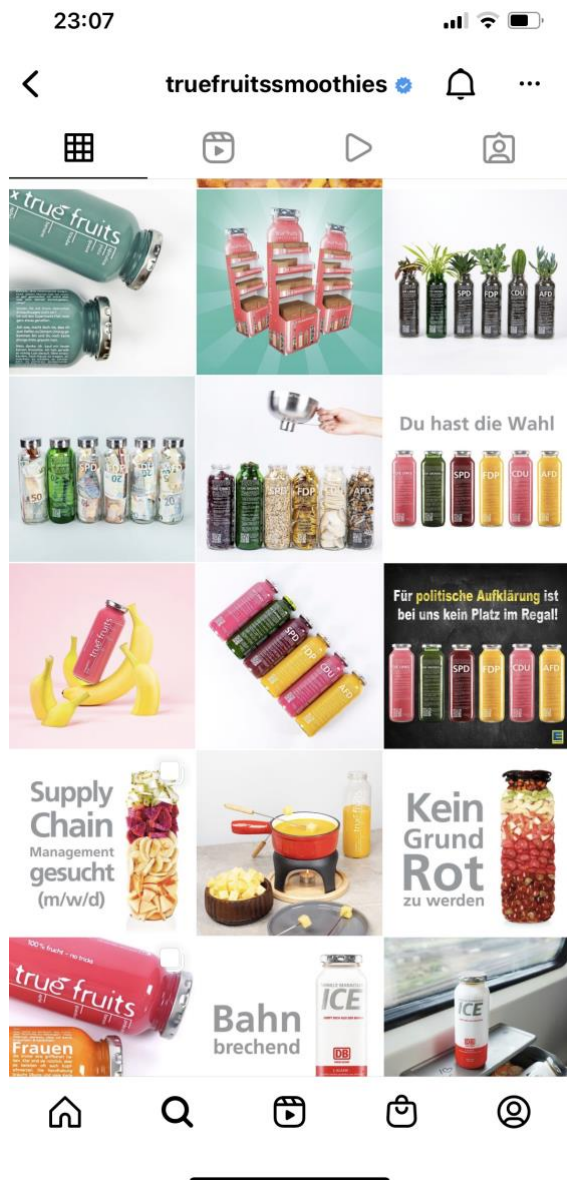
Appendix E: Company information – Viva con Agua (R5: Michael Fritz)

In the following, this is how Viva con Agua defines their activism:

„OUR APPROACH – POSITIVE ACTIVISM
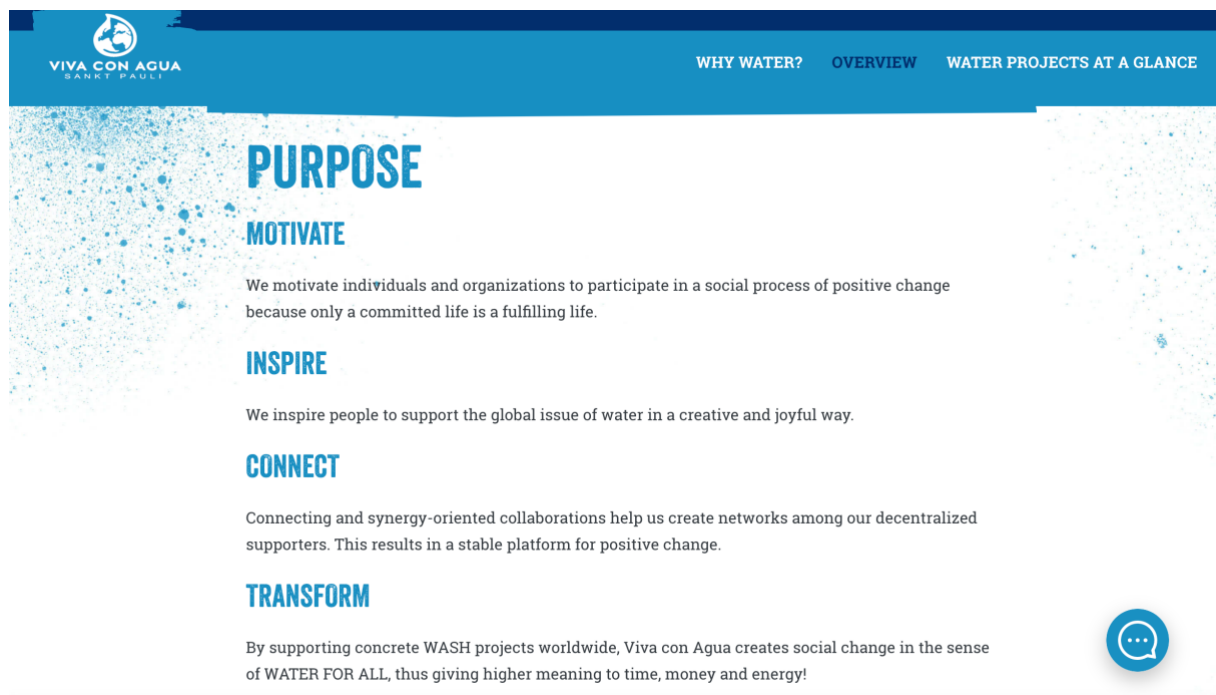
As an ALL PROFIT organization (non-profit sounds so joyless) we rely on the universal languages of music, art and sport to encourage people to advocate clean drinking water and generate donations.

We raise funds through joyful activities, which flow into WASH projects in an increasing number of Viva con Agua countries. WASH stands for water, sanitation and hygiene and improves the living conditions of many people in the long term.

The association Viva con Agua de Sankt Pauli e.V. was officially registered in 2006 and recognized as non-profit.

The Viva con Agua family has grown steadily since these early days. There are voluntary Viva con Agua crews in numerous German cities and independent registered associations in Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Uganda and South Africa.

The idea of an ALL PROFIT organization as well as a kind of fundraising that is fun and brings joy have thus become an international idea and prove the vision "Water for all – all for water" to be true!"

(Source: https://www.vivaconagua.org/en/vision/)

(Source: Instagram vivaconagua)

Appendix F: Semi-structured interview guide

Semi-structured Interview Guide
1) First of all, tell me about yourself. What is your position at (COMPANY NAME)? How long have you been working at (COMPANY NAME) and what motivates you to work there?
2) In your own words: What does (COMPANY NAME) do? How do you define (COMPANY NAME) purpose & values?
3) Were these defined by (COMPANY NAME)? Do you agree with the ones you mentioned or do you have additions?

4)	In general: Are you familiar with the term "brand activism" or "socio-political advocacy"? If so, how do you define it? - Or do you prefer a similar term that you rather define?
5)	How would you classify (COMPANY NAME) in these theories? Do such concepts play a role for your organisation? Or how would you describe (COMPANY NAME)'s socio-political initiative/engagement?
6)	What drives you to stand up for certain topics? How do you live it within your organisation?
7)	Was that a very conscious decision, which is integrated into your business strategy? If so, how?
8)	How do you decide, as an organisation, on which events / to which socio-political issues you speak up to in public? Do you follow certain criteria? If yes, which ones?
9)	To what extent do your purpose and values play a role in this?
10)	Do you always give your opinion on any event? Do you sometimes get pressured to express it? If so, how do you deal with it?
11)	Who is involved in these processes and why? Do you proceed according to ready-made plans, or how do you structure yourself?
12)	What channels do you use to express your opinion? Who is in charge for what?
13)	If taking a stand publicly, opinions will always differ. - Do you think about possible reactions in advance and prepare for them? If yes how?
14)	How do (COMPANY NAME)s socio-political initiatives impact your employees?
15)	How does it impact other stakeholders, such as customers, partner companies / suppliers, society ...?
16)	How does it impact your business?
17)	How do you stay authentic & unique, if more and more companies pursue similar approaches or follow woke washing? E.g. for marketing or other reasons?
18)	Did the corona crises had influences on you? How? Did it influenced you internal processes? If so, how?
The END	

Thank you so much, it was really insightful to talk to you!

Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix G: Interview Transcript R1 with Lisa Jaspers from Folkdays (English Version)

Ricarda
Well, your time is precious. So I would just start by asking my first questions. Is it okay that I record?

Lisa
Absolutely.

Ricarda
Okay, great. So first of all about you as a person, you are the founder of Folkdays, when did you found Folkdays and what motivated you to found Folkdays?

Lisa
Well, I actually studied politics and development economics, so not something in the creative sector, not even business. And after that, I had my first experiences in the development..., in the political context. I worked for an NGO, then for a consultancy that also advised development organisations. Then I decided for myself that I found the approach of development cooperation very...(I didn't know that at the time, but in the meantime the right word for it is very "neo-colonialist"), so in the end it's the development of structural injustices into the present. Under the guise of "doing good" and, I think, with Folkdays, I was looking for a way of how to run a business on a equal level playing field. And absurdly enough, although this is of course counterintuitive in the capitalist system, business is much more at eye level than charity, and accordingly that was our focus from the beginning. So we specifically worked with small, artisanal businesses in the global South. Especially regions that are more rural, because handicrafts are something that are in daily use there. And that was the basic idea behind it, to use the strengths that are given, even in the poorest regions of the world, because they are unbelievably skilled, to share some of the wealth that we have in a way which is not condescending. That was the main idea behind Folkdays.

Ricarda
Nice. In your own words: how would you describe Folkdays, what does Folkdays do, what is Folkdays? And how do you define your values and purpose?

Lisa
Well, Folkdays is a fashion and design label that co-creates handicraft products with producers from the global south. And we sell them here in Germany and Europe. And the purpose of Folkdays is...well, by now I would probably say two purposes, but they are probably directly related. One is, to establish value chains, or simply a way of doing business that benefits everyone. Both people who work for us here and people who work for us in our supply chains, as well as me as a founder. So, by that I don't necessarily mean just monetarily, but also as people, so to speak, finding fulfilment and of course also benefiting monetarily, but that it is simply a way of doing business everyone is benefitting from.

Ricarda

Great. And was that clear, so did you define it clearly for Folkdays at the beginning or was it clearly given? According to the motto: "these are our values. This is what we stand for and this is our purpose. Also Mission Vision and internally"?

Lisa
Well, we defined a corporate identity in the early stage, and there are still things that I would totally stand behind. (ciao Chiara, thank you!) What has been added now, and of course this has a lot to do with my inner process and also with the book, are, I think, the topics that we simply focus on more strongly as a team. That is to say, I think that with the CI we also stated that we want to work not only externally but also internally with a certain image of humanity. But I think a concrete vision like the one I have now, namely that I actually want to create a workplace where the people who come here feel comfortable, are able to be their selves and hopefully also develop on a personal level. I think this is something that has only come about in the last few years, maybe the last two or three years. And that's why I would say that this has been added, so to speak, if we were to revise the CI again now, this would get a stronger focus now. Back then, we were very much focused on our clients and our producers in terms of benefiting from what we do. But at the end of the day, I believe that it can only be sustainable, so you can only be seriously sustainable as a company if you also manage to create a workplace that meets the same requirements as what you actually want to do along the value chain. That's why what has been added is more like this.

Ricarda
Yes, very valid point... The terms brand activism, socio-political advocacy, do they mean something to you? If so, how would you define them, how would you classify Folkdays? Or is there any other term you would use?

Lisa
Well, I think folkdays is one thing, the question is how does folkdays work in the system? In the meantime, I would no longer describe myself primarily as an entrepreneur, but rather as a "systempreneur", which is a topic we also deal with a bit in our book, that it is more about...looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system? And not to say "okay, now I'm an entrepreneur, now it's just about making Folkdays as big as possible". But to always look at: "What is my role in the system? What is our role in the system? Does it actually make sense to grow at all or can't we do it much better in other forms of activism?" And in that context, of course, I am, we are as a company, also very activist. I mean, we have, or I have, but also with Folkdays, and also of course with a lot of support from the team, we have started this campaign "fair by law". In the end, we wanted to push the government to pass a supply chain law three years ago. That is activist. We don't have any added value in terms of our business, except that we put an incredible amount of energy into it. But it's not...Sure, at the end of the day I can now somehow give some talks on the supply chain law from time to time, where I sometimes even get paid for, but those were not monetary reasons, but rather the view of: "Okay, what we're doing here won't lead to a significant change on the global level, because we're simply far too small and it's going far too slow so we simply had to look for other solutions. And I think that as a human being, I always tend to move on a systemic level and always ask: "Okay, what role do we play? What's the best, what's the smartest?" So, I also often try to approach it very unpretentiously and say: "What is best for the impact and not what is the coolest or most exciting for me as a founder, although that often goes hand in hand." But I would definitely say that I am a social entrepreneur, but, if the term meant something to more people, I would probably call myself more of a systempreneur.

Ricarda

Okay, and also including Folkdays then? But would you use the term brand activism for Folkdays, for example?

Lisa

Yes, I would see it that way, because we simply do a lot of educational work within the framework that we have. Fair by law was also, so to speak, even if the initial impetus came from me, it was a corporate project, or it still is a corporate project. Totally, so in any case!

Ricarda

Okay. But such theories...did it happen by chance that you do brand activism? Or did you read about it and you thought: "To start a company doing something like that...So how did that come up?

Lisa

It was actually more that we did what we did. And then we realised that maybe there are other ways to change the status quo and that's how I think it came about. So it was more like: "Ah, why is nobody talking about this topic? It's totally crazy. And it's actually a good solution to many problems. Why? How can we make it a bit more public and maybe a bit sexier? And then we simply used the skills we had as Folkdays to bring a topic that is very unwieldy at first, namely supply chain law, closer to the general public.

Ricarda

Okay, you already answered the next question, namely, what drives you to stand up for certain issues? And to what extent do you live them in your company? So what do you do to make sure that it is lived and understood in the company, i.e. the whole issue?

Lisa

Hmm...it's always better to ask my employees, because for me it's sometimes like this... You just said that you've never heard of an organisation that ticks like we do. That's what a friend of mine said the other day, who has also worked for us a lot in the past. She said: "You know what, one thing I find totally amazing is how independently everyone is working with you and there's no pressure at all. And it's not like: "Do it this way and that way! And it's so full of fun...also flexible, everyone can come and go when they want. No one would ever control working hours and times, or who takes how many vacation days and when." And I don't even notice that anymore, because it kind of developed that way over the years and sometimes I don't really appreciate that anymore. But I think what we do is very special. And I think that automatically creates a culture of...I have the feeling that everyone here...and it's not always easy and sometimes there are of course arguments and somehow differences of opinion and so on. But I do believe that we have a culture here where everyone is allowed to ask everything, and say everything, and question everything, and does so. So, for example, Chiara, (who just left), maybe as a small example, is our first intern who challenged us a bit about how we actually deal with interns. And not in the sense that we are cool with our interns and pay them, but also in the sense of being a bit of a "second-class employee". So they don't have the same perks as everyone else, the flexibility and blah blah blah. And I think it's cool because I think that in the beginning we were all really concerned about that and we were like: Yo, for an internship...We've all done shitty internships in our lives, that's what you do." And all the interns were always super happy here. But I think she's totally right. So I think she's totally right and that it's good that she dares to speak up like this, and to challenge, which is also a super uncomfortable task. And we are already thinking about how to achieve this flexibility that we now have. That's why I was under time pressure, for example, because I knew that I'd

be closing the shop at 7 pm today. And that's why here too...I'm more or less scheduled here with: "Okay, we don't want the interns to always be the last ones sitting here. And that has only developed now. So that means we are also learning. We haven't eaten wisdom with spoons either, and this is new territory for everyone somehow. But I have the feeling that, yes, we're actually doing a pretty good job, even if it's annoying sometimes. But you should continuously question whether it's actually cool the way we do it.

Ricarda
Cool. So that was a very conscious decision that Folkdays also has a purpose from the beginning...to what extent do you integrate that into your business strategy. How do you balance that with the business in order to stay profitable?

Lisa
I mean, for the fact that the origin is the way it is, of course...hmm the moment we don't have a purpose anymore, we would stop doing it. And of course we also have the great advantage that sales and purpose are very closely linked. Because if we sell more, so to speak, we can buy more products and thus also have more economic development in the regions. And that's cool, of course. And at the same time, of course, it's clear that we still have to pay the people here so well that they don't work here in an exploitative way, just so that we can buy more products from the local people. So I think it's always a bit of a negotiation process between all of us, but I think we manage quite well because I think we all stand wholeheartedly behind what we do and nobody optimises them self. So there is no one making you realise…ah okay.... It's more like...everyone is so super conscientious and also so aware of what a precious commodity they are somehow dealing with. And even if it's only money somehow. No, because so much impetus can be created with it. So I think that we all deal with it very responsibly. And I don't have the feeling that this has ever really been in conflict. So maybe a situation in which we have to decide to sell via Amazon or not. Where we then decide quite clearly against it. But that's exactly the kind of thing that could be a decision. So we now also offer our things on Zalando, we started doing that during the lockdown. That's something that we discussed openly and then thought: "Do we want that? And now we've said we'll try it out and if it's worth it, then we'll continue with it. But now we've noticed that we have a lot of returns. And then it could happen that in one or two months we say we won't do it anymore. Because the disadvantages are greater than the advantages. But these are also things that we simply discuss openly in the team.

Ricarda
Ah ok, very interesting, because I would now also like to go a bit beyond the processes. In what way are the decisions actually made? So are all of you always involved as a team of nine? And yes, how do you decide in the company, also in general, which events or which socio-political topics you represent publicly or share your opinion on or create attention for your community? And do you have criteria, and if so, what are they?

Lisa
No, we don't have any criteria. I would say that we always do it very discursively here. And I would also say that it goes a bit in the direction of a competence-based hierarchy. That means that not everyone always has a say in every little decision, but that actually everyone always knows who is well informed in which topics and then...but everyone gives their opinion on all important decisions. That definitely. Um...and I don't know. Maybe I also see my role in it a little bit... to support it, so we have situations from time to time where a staff member who is more socialised in a slightly different system says to me: "Hey Lisa, in the end you have to decide, you're the boss". And I'm always like: "No, absolutely not. I don't want to decide that

by myself. I would only do it if we all stand behind it. And I don't want to co-work like that. I don't want to make a decision that you actually think is stupid. That's not how I want to work." And I'm already pushing that hard because I just don't think...in the end I always take the responsibility. It's not about shifting the responsibility away from me, but just...I'm firmly convinced that we come to better decisions when we make the decision together. I'm not the smartest one here in the team, we're all smart in our different ways. And so, yes, it did develop rather organically here. I also think that because we all have a very good relationship with each other, and we all like each other very much, it's also completely okay. And even our intern says: "Hey guys, do you have your asses up, why do I always have to sit here in the evening and you all guys go home?" So, yes, what we have in terms of structure is a feedback process, which is also presented a bit in our book and that is definitely a topic again... and what we have already, and that has of course led to the fact that we have a kind of culture where we are very, where we are very open and can also exchange ideas well and can also be critical sometimes, because we all like each other so much that we don't have to be afraid that something bad will happen. In the meantime, we have actually reached a point in large parts of our team where I think we have a very good level of communication.

Ricarda
Okay, well, because I'm already talking about a lot of different topics. You haven't...a good counter-example is Ooia, for example, which deals very, very strongly with all the issues around women in business, etc. Do you already have clearly defined topics? Do you already have a clear vision, so that everything revolves around these topics and you strongly not addressing certain topics, or how do you decide? And do you somehow have a...for example topics like Black Lives Matter, which was so big movement again last year...do you have defined steps that you talk through, or how do you decide? Is there an action plan, so to speak? Or do you sit down with your team and think whether it suits you or not? Or are there guidelines? By having predefined goals and values and a purpose, which topics do you address and which not? How does that work?

Lisa
I think we address all the things that move us as a team or as individuals. And if someone has something, a topic that is important to her, she can always bring it up. And then we would also get together in some way, if it just fits, in terms of time, so to speak! So not randomly. Although maybe even randomly... So when an urgency is brought to us from outside, we simply decide: "Okay, are we behind it or not?" And that is actually clarified relatively quickly. So there are rarely any discussions.

Ricarda
Hmhm.

Lisa
Of course, as an individual, I am already involved in a lot of issues that go further away from Fairtrade and value chains, and the bottom line is that I am also in the process of building up a network of women with Naomi, my co-author, and how we want to somehow reinvent how the economy is thought through, how entrepreneurship is thought through, how financing structures are created and so on. And that means that I am also active in this area and, to be honest, we are currently writing a second book. It will also go very much into this whole patriarchal system, it goes very far away from... no, but that's all connected, because the reason why we think that we can't do business differently than we do today is because we are stuck in these patriarchal structures and in a system that somehow takes away our fantasies of how to do business it differently. So from that point of view, I would say that some of the

topics are also initiated by me, but actually everyone in our team is interested in these topic and maybe even informs themselves about these topics or is active or whatever. Yes, but for example, I asked myself yesterday or the day before yesterday, so maybe that's a good example...things are going wild in Afghanistan right now, I don't know if you've heard. At the end of the day, we also have two sisters from Afghanistan with whom we work, with whom we sell earrings, and I think it would be cool to push the whole issue of Afghanistan a bit more. No, so to say that we are positioning ourselves on this and simply draw a bit of attention to it, I think that would be something that would totally suit us. So that we are somehow taking on an activist role in relation to it.

Ricarda
Interesting!

Lisa
Then I would probably bring that up. And I would probably propose it and post it into our social media group. And then everyone would probably say "yeah, let's do it" and then we would do it. Or just say: "Boor no, I think it's too hot, the situation is somehow too messy, I have a bad feeling about it...let's maybe wait a little bit on how it evolves." So, then it would just happen like this.

Ricarda
Okay, interesting. Yes, exactly, that was also the case with the Israel/Palestine conflict, you also had to decide as a company, whether you position yourself. Or do you say nothing at all?

Lisa
Yes!

Ricarda
Yes, with Afghanistan, if you also have a connection to it, then it makes sense that you speak out. What happens when, or I don't know if it happens at all, but are you sometimes put under pressure to somehow express your opinion on such topics from the outside? Does it sometimes come from the outside as well?

Lisa
No, not really. Not so far.

Ricarda
Okay, no. Then to the next question. Which channels do you use to reveal your opinion?

Lisa
I would say mainly social media and of course interviews and so on, right? So classic press.

Ricarda
Okay, then... I don't know if it's that common...but there's always when you have a strong point of view, you know there's going to be different opinions about it. Some people think it's good, some people think it's bad, some people you don't know. Do you think about possible reactions in advance? And do you have an action plan ready for how you will react? Is that something that also influences your decision? How do you deal with it?

Lisa
I would say that most of the people we go out with, the people who challenge us, I think you

can ignore them. And we don't do that very often. So we just say okay, we can't please everybody. I think the last time we had a discussion like this... I do an Instagram Live format where I talk to different port leaders about different topics that go beyond Folkdays. And the last time we had a short discussion was when I said I would love to have a conversation with Kübra Gümüca, who has written a book and is wearing a headscarf. And then one of the team members said, "That's cool, but only that we are aware of it. It's possible that people will come and hate us for inviting her." And Teresa also said when we announced it that we lost followers too. But I think, when we did the talk with her we also got some new followers, too so...And even if I had known that we would lose followers, I would have done it anyway, because she is so smart and I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart. So it doesn't matter what skin colour, what religion and what background they have, of course! For marketing reasons, we would never say: "Okay, we don't talk about these topics. We don't want to talk about racism openly because it's somehow unsexy or some people feel put on the spot." The other day, the mum of a good friend of mine asked me about it: "Oh, I heard you had a conversation with Renate Künert the other day..." blah blah... and then I explained the Instagram Live format to her. And then she said: "Oh, that's cool, I'll have a look at that". I can't wait to see her reaction. Because she's from Gütersloh. She is a woman who is rather classical, not necessarily conservative, she has certainly voted for the SPD a few times, but not progressive either. And when she looks at the talks, I'm curious, there will be things that she might find crass, right? And at the same time I also think that she will find it somehow exciting and perhaps also inspiring. And I do believe that someone like her, when she notices that Lisa also talks to Kübra, who wears a headscarf, and approaches the subject a little differently, then I think it is something that can impact her getting a different image of women who wear a headscarf. That it is not always a sign of oppression, but perhaps also of pride and cultural heritage and so on. So...oh, I think if I wasn't allowed to be myself, with all my opinions and all my diversity and I mean, I also let myself be challenged. Sometimes there is also a situation where I am also challenged in the team and someone says, "Hey Lisa..!" For example, there was once the issue that I am a development economist. At some point we said: "Well, developing countries don't exist. And actually we don't want to use this term anymore." And that was a bit disruptive for me at first. I asked myself: "What did I study then, or how have I been shaped? And then I started thinking about the "white saviour" complex. And I think it also came from the team, that someone said, I think we have to be really careful, let's rethink this! How do we have to communicate? Well, yes... I don't know, did that answer your question?

Ricarda
Yes, definitely, very informative. What would you say is the influence of Folkdays' engagement on the employees?

Lisa
I think the commitment is the employees! Well, you can't separate them from each other. So it comes from each other and from the people who are here together. And I think everyone here in the team is quite political, activist and also interested and open.

Ricarda
Nice answer! And how would you describe it...What impact does your engagement, or your activism have on the other stakeholders, i.e. customers, partner companies, suppliers, society etc.?

Lisa

I do believe that we make people a bit smarter, I would say that. I also think that hopefully, I don't know to what extent our producers will notice that we have fought for a supply chain law and so on. I don't know at all, but of course they benefit greatly from it. So if there is a supply chain law, that means for their home countries that hopefully the supply chains will have to change a bit and less people will be exploited. Yes, but of course there are also customers who buy us because they find the products beautiful, and because they find us somehow hip, and not because they want to learn a lot about our artisans. And of course, we still have to see how to manage that well, yes, how to manage that well. In other words, not overloading people with too much detailed information and at the same time help them opening up to questions and topics. I think that is also a bit of what we are trying to do.

Ricarda
The next question would have been, what influence does it have on your business?

Lisa
Yes, I think that with all the decisions we make, we always ask ourselves the question: "Does this make sense? Does this make sense for the impact? And does that make sense for us, and what kind of world we want to live in, and how does that fit together?" Those are always questions that we ask ourselves when we make important decisions and I think that leads to that connection being very close, to our stakeholders as you define them more broadly. But yes, I think we are indeed aware of the responsibility.

Ricarda
Then let me turn to my last question. To what extent did the Corona crisis influence you internally? And why?

Lisa
To be honest, I don't think it really impacted us at all, except that we couldn't see each other properly any more. But we already had a very flexible model of "everybody can work whenever and from wherever". And so... Frauke is the best example with Lisbon. And that means that from the beginning, from Folkday's foundation, we have positioned ourselves in such a way that you can work from anywhere. And that's why it's cool that one of our staff members now spends three months, two months in Portugal and one month in Italy remotely. And she travels around with her boyfriend. So Frauke lives in Lisbon, which would of course be possible for everyone else also. So, I don't think it changed us that much. Except, as I said, that we didn't see each other personally in the team. That was hard, of course. And normally it's different, we see each other regularly and have a drink together or do something. That's why we're having two summer parties this year. We've already had one and now there's another one at the end of August on a raft. But yeah, I'd say it hasn't impacted us that much, except that we got much better in actually having our team meetings. Kind of once a week and so we've improved the check-in part a lot so that we can see how everybody is doing, also on a personal level.

Ricarda
Okay, perfect, it was super interesting to talk to you. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Lisa: No.

Jessica
Got it? Okay. I think it's recording now.

Ricarda
Yes, it's recording now. Okay. So thank you so much for coming. And we would, I would like to start with a quick introduction. So my, my thesis is about brands taking a stand on social political issues. It's a qualitative study on organizations behind the scenes, which is very interesting, because most literature, which I was reviewing is only about the consumers perspective. And I want to learn more about the internal processes and the internal thinking about brand activism and or like, in total, like when brands are actually engaging in social political advocacy. And so first of all about you: What is your job position? How long have you been doing or like working in that position, and for that company, and what motivates you to work there?

Jessica
Okay, so I'm Jessica, and I'm the business lead of spring. So I am in charge of two platforms GoSpring and MySpring. So as a business lead, I am in charge of the operational stuff on a daily basis. So I make sure that first of all, the revenue share is up to plan with our business plan, the amount we sell. And of course, I am in charge of launching new products, discontinuing products. Continuously optimizing the website, and of course, taking care of the stock. So creating stock forecasts, reordering products, and setting up campaigns. So, everything that goes around the platform I am in charge of, I've been doing this for almost two years, on the first of October, I want to have a two year my two-year anniversary. And my motivation to work for Wellster in this case, is actually first of all working in a company which really makes a difference. So offering solutions for customers that really struggle in their day to day life, making their life more simple. And this is first of all, second of all, working in a young company, which is this agile. So everything I do I see the impact, positive and negative. And lastly, working in such an emerging market, so we are an innovative company. So telemedicine is something new and it is still a grey area. So being part of such a disruptive company, and yeah, it's my third motivation.

Ricarda
Nice. Okay, thank you. And so how would you define GoSpring, you kind of answered it a bit, but maybe GoSpring in general, because we later will talk about the Christopher Street Day Parade as well, which is rather GoSpring related, right? Or like, if you if you want to talk about both platforms do both maybe? Yeah..?!

Jessica
No, I don't mind. I think we should stick to GoSpring.

Ricarda
Okay. Okay, perfect. So, what does GoSpring do? How would you define it? And how would you define its purpose and values?

Jessica
Okay, so I would say GoSpring is a platform for men that offers solutions simple and trustworthy with effective medications against erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation. Hmm...We offer three kinds of products. So first of all, products which need to be prescribed, second of all, over the counter medication. And lastly, digital therapies. How would I describe

GoSpring I will say in German, and then I will translate it. So, to describe spring in one sentence, it will be: "Durchatmen, wir kriegen es hin." So be brief: "Don't worry, we will solve your problem." So as so many men starting the age of 50, every third man actually suffers from erectile dysfunction or premature ejaculation. It is a problem which is really widely spread. Men really struggled to go to see a urologist because it is embarrassing, because it is a shame topic. And it's even worse for them to go to the pharmacy and to be facing a woman who's standing behind the counter to buy their Viagra or Cialis and so on.

Ricarda
Yeah, makes sense. What about the purpose and values?

Jessica
Okay, so I would say the purpose of GoSpring is to give men serenity to overcome their health challenges with ease. And the values will be to be discreet, to be approachable, to solve problems, and to actually enable others to not feel excluded. So, a man actually always defines him, not always, but many men define themselves by their looks, and by their performance and bed. And having people are having so many men, especially at the age of 50, struggle with something like an erection really makes them feel like they are not part of the community, like they are excluded from the people around them, that they're different, that they're disconnected. So with GoSpring, we actually want to make those men feel like it is okay to be different. And that there are solutions to it.

Ricarda
Okay, nice. Thank you. So this is already something which is also defined in your GoSpring values, purpose, like, it's something you have defined beforehand?

Jessica
Yeah, exactly.

Ricarda
So, are you actually familiar with the terms brand activism or socio-political advocacy? And if so, how would you define it? Is it something you are, you know, from, like, from a personal level? Or is it something you speak about in the company?

Jessica
So, I didn't know the terms until you told me about them that those terms actually exist. I was aware that there are companies with with actually, who actually try to break the norm, or who or who stand for something. And I would say that with GoSpring, we are for sure trying to break the norm, trying to make it okay to have an erectile dysfunction or to have a premature ejaculation. So, we are standing up for those people, we are trying to break the taboo and trying to break the shame topic, the shame point around this.

Ricarda
Okay, nice.

Jessica
Yeah, I would say yes, I do see us in this I we are activists in our own way in breaking the status quo.

Ricarda

Yes, okay nice. Thank you. And, yeah, what drives you as GoSpring to stand up for certain topics? And how do you live those topics within your organization as well?

Jessica

Okay, so, to the first question, what drives you to stand up for the certain topics: So what drives us to certain topics is that everyone actually deserves to love. And everyone deserves to actually have a fulfilled sex life, regardless how, regardless with whom, and having something like erectile dysfunction, which so many men have, it is something which makes us which cranks us up, and which says: "Oh, we really need to do something about it!" Because so many people suffer from it, but everyone deserves it everyone deserves, so every man deserves to have an erection. So, we see that people actually are hurt, they are insecure, and so on. So, we see that there is need there, which is why we stand up for it, and how do we live it within our organization? I would say that in the company generally there are no taboos. So people talk about everything. And freedom of speech. And freedom of opinion, is very big here. So you are not judged or criticized for speaking out something which is usually something you don't do. Like the best example is, since we are a company situated in Munich, which is a, I would say, a rather conservative city in Germany, we have a unisex bathroom here. And at the beginning, everyone was like, ohh, do we really have to have men and women in the same bathroom? Yes, we have women's stalls and men's stalls, but it's still it's an awkward thing. And it was already like a discussion back and forth. And everyone had their own thoughts. So what we did is we put up memes. So, everyone was allowed to choose a meme who wasn't really comfortable with it, and put it in the bathroom in a joking way. So to break the norm of having this: "Now I just peed and there was another male colleague with me now in the bathroom, I don't feel comfortable." We put like: "hey, when you are in the urinal, close your door, no one wants to see your (?) behind..." or stuff like that, you know, with humour, but just speaking out the things we usually don't want to speak out. So, same with ED, with erectile dysfunctions. Men don't want to talk about it, but just putting a bit of a smirk to it.

Ricarda

Did I understand it right that everyone was allowed...like, if I would be an employee now would I be able to print out a meme and just put it? And that was kind of a vote against it, or how did you decide to make it happen? Was there voting taking place?

Jessica

We were having lunch, and it was only us girls. And then I don't know who was saying, Yeah, I'm on my period. And every time I go in with toilet bag to the toilet, and I come out and there's a man and it's like…it's uncomfortable. So, one of my colleagues was like, hey, but why don't we just put like, messages to lighten up the mood in the bathroom, so it's not so awkward and uncomfortable and shameful? Because it's not shameful. We are all humam beings, we all need to go to the bathroom. There's no human being who doesn't have to. So..

Ricarda

Okay, nice. So you try to within the company also reduce the shamefulness on those topics and make people opening up?

Jessica

Yes, and now all the bathroom stalls have, like, for example, female products, like tampons, and so on. Just to break it to be like: "Ah, okay, even in the men's store, there is something because sometimes it's full. So you end up going to the men's so which is no problem, but just to ease it a bit.

Ricarda

So nice. That's really, really cool. All right. Yeah, I just like the next question would have been, what is the link to your core business? Is it included in the business strategy? So you basically answered this by like, the whole topic is a topic, you want to break the norm, and the whole topic is surrounded by your business or the other way around? So, maybe this is a bit off now. But, I know also, that you had, maybe you can also talk about it later that you also because we were talking about how do you live it within your organization, and you gave me a great example. But I know that you also participated in Christopher street day, which is also different, like another topic on top of breaking the norms and taking the shamefulness off this topic, but it's more about being trans being gay, whatever, like openness in society. Do you talk about that a bit as well?

Jessica

So, we were, we were looking a few months back at our data about our customer data. And we saw that only 6 or 7% of our customer base was actually homosexual. And we know that generally 10% of the population is statistically homosexual. So we were wondering, perhaps, does this problem occur less with homosexuals or not? We were open to it. So then the idea popped up. Okay, perhaps we are very strong present in the channels were only heterosexual more heterosexual men are in. And perhaps we have to go into channels where more homosexual men are, so that they can hear about us and actually that we could solve the problems as well. So which is why we decided to go to the Christopher Street Day in Cologne, and we had a truck and we tried to make it funny. And because we put on as a big sign on our truck reports: "Let's make erections great again!" And on the other side, we had the writing of: "Everyone deserves love equality and erections!" So the Christopher Street Day is a demonstration for the rights and equality of homosexual people in Germany, which is why we wanted to support that, but we still wanted to add a message here and say: "Hey, you all deserve love. You all deserve equality, but you all deserve erections as well, because this is another taboo which needs to be broken." And we had merged which as well broke the norm. So we had like bags where we wrote this bag contains lubricant condoms and Viagra. We had stickers which said: "you are beautiful", "you are hot", "you are a sex god in your own way". Even if you have issues with your erectile dysfunction doesn't mean that you are not a hot person that you are not attractive. Yeah, so and people were actually they responded really well. And they started sticking the stickers on their foreheads and on their arms and wearing our T shirts and our bags, breaking the norm with us. So, we gave voice to the gay men of this parade. Since they were actually demonstrating for the Equal Rights, it was a kind of way for them to demonstrate for them to actually have the right to have an erection as well. So, yeah, that's only the...

Ricarda

And you as a company participated, right? Like a few of your employees were on the, on the truck?

Jessica

Yes, we so we are a company right now are 50 people, and 20 came. So that was really nice. So only actually the brand GoSpring and paid for this truck. But people from other teams joined because they wanted to help out and because they support the Christopher Street Day, so..

Ricarda

Nice. Nice. Okay, regarding the processes within the organization, and how do you as an organization decide which events or which social political issues you speak up to in public? Do you follow certain criteria? If yes, Which ones? Is it? Yeah, I first let you just say whatever comes in mind, and then maybe I can add something..

Jessica
Yeah, we do! It has to be aligned with our purpose and with our values. So, we will not go to a rock concert where there's only music, I mean, it would be actually meaningless. So, there has to be a meaning behind it. And it has to be aligned with what we stand for. And what we want to reach. So, yeah. Okay. So the criteria would be if you would need specific ones is, is there a call to action with us being there? So for example, for the CSD, the call to action would have been: "You have the right to have an erection. So do something about it. Perhaps if we would go to metal concert, the call to action here wouldn't really fit to what we're actually doing yeah..

Ricarda
Okay, nice. Okay. Great. Um, and, yeah, the next question would, would have been, to what extent the purpose and values play a role in it. But you already mentioned that. And so do you always, like for example, I know that you don't really do it, but maybe it's something you have talked about within the company or organization. And so if like, certain events pop up, for example, something regarding climate change, or the like what's happening in Afghanistan now,...things like that. It could be everything. It could be also, like abort, maybe this is more US related, but the abortion law in the US stuff like that. Do you think about putting your opinion out there via your social media networks or something like this? Is this something? Yeah, what is your opinion about that? From your organization?

Jessica
So we do not put any statements about politics or about what's happening in the world? Because we don't believe that it is our place to say something about war, or to say something about abortion rules in the USA. So no, we do stand out. We do state our opinion when it has to do with us and with what we often will with what we stand for, but that's it.

Ricarda
Yes. Yeah. If there would be like, yeah, change in law for more equality, for example, in Germany, which is your topic, topic related, then you put out your opinion?

Jessica
Yes. Like, for example, the Christopher Street Day. So, we are we are invested in this and we live by this even our company, so everyone, regardless of your sexuality is part of it. So this is even some...these are our values. And yeah, and I mean, even after the Christopher Street Day, everyone was so emotionally impacted by it, that everyone wants still talking about it like for the entire week. And again, it was so nice, and I'm so sad for people who or people were saying that they were so sad that there are so many people who can't live their basic rights, because it's just not accepted by so many people or by our society. So, you can really that people are part of it to their heart and with their gut and with everything that have, so...

Ricarda
Nice. So, what channels do you normally use to express your opinion?

Jessica

So, we go offline, we have out of home campaigns as well. We had our out of home campaign in Berlin, we use the actually the Berlin tower, and we did put a cricket. And we wrote: "Geh' steif!". So translated it would mean: "go hard." So, instead of being crooked for the Berlin tower to go straight, so you're breaking the norm again. Of course, we use social media. So, Instagram, and Facebook, not so much, actually, because it's very difficult. You get blocked very fast all the time. And of course, via email to our sending customers.

Ricarda
So, regarding the outcomes, and if you're taking a stand publicly, opinions always differ. So, do you think about possible reactions? Or did you have any bad reactions on it? And if so, do you think about it in advance and prepare yourself for it? Like, how would you deal with it?

Jessica
Well, for one, everyone has the right for their own opinion. So, even if we get bad reviews, or bad comments on social media, or wherever we leave them, because everyone has the right to express what they think. And so no, we don't prepare it. We do, of course answer when we think it's adequate, or an answer is required. But besides that, free opinion for everyone, and whoever wants to state something has the right to do it. So, even during the CSD, for example, we had different reactions to our truck. So, the majority really liked and laughed with us and said: "This is so cool, what we're doing." But there were still a few people who were saying, like: "What is wrong with you, or you are an example for what is wrong with the world". For stating something like this at a demonstration, which is supposed to be like all about equality and rights. So, it was it was it was really surprising for me to actually witness this being on the truck and having someone tell me, like: "what's wrong with you? Or why are we doing something like that?" But, yeah...they have the right to do, huh?!

Ricarda
Wow! Where did you get this reaction? In Cologne, like, into your face?

Jessica
Yeah, well, I was standing up there, and someone looked at me and told me, "what you're doing is what is wrong with the world!"

Ricarda
 Oh, wow. Okay.

Jessica
Yeah, but that's okay.

Ricarda
Okay. So, yeah, the fact that you...Yeah, you kind of mentioned it already, but maybe you want to add something as well. So the fact that you already put a stake in the ground with an example, for example, participating in Christopher street day, and say, these are the issues we care about, you want to change, the normal, or the norm. We stand for equality. And yeah, we want equal human rights. How does it impact your employees? And how do they respond to it? or? Yeah, are they motivated? Is this the motivation they come to work for or what would you say? What is the impact for your employees and in general?

Jessica
They're all very invested. So as I said, here, even in the company we do accept and live by everyone has a right and everyone has the same rights, and it's all equal. So, everyone is

emotionally invested, because we are friends here at the office at the end of the day. So, even by being there at that demonstration, we're still not just demonstrating for the others, but we're also demonstrating for our friends at the company as well. So, everyone is involved. So on a personal level as well.

Ricarda
Okay. Okay, nice, and how would you say it impacts other stakeholders, like customers, community, suppliers maybe? And just society in general?

Jessica
No, we've received very positive feedback for our actions at the Christopher Street Day. Customers actually recognized that us and were like: "We're your customers! Can I have some of your bags?" And we were like: "Take five." It was very nice. We were even posted on Twitter where someone said, "Hey, I buy my stuff and on their platform. I got their bag. I'm so happy #DankeGoSpring." So no, they like it. They accept it, we get a lot of respect for it as well for speaking out the unspoken.

Ricarda
Nice.

Jessica
So, yes.

Ricarda
So, you will really see the value in the like everyday life?

Jessica
For sure!

Ricarda
And yeah, and then how does it impact your business?

Jessica
So for now, I can't tell you yet if we have reached out to more homosexual people after this action, so perhaps I can give you an answer in a few weeks. Because for now, the sales are increasing, of course, but we only know their sexuality after the order for the second time. So we're on it, but hopefully it does.

Ricarda
Okay, nice. Um, and then two more questions regarding the future? How do you make sure to stay authentic and unique, especially when more and more brands are using those? Yeah, as more like as communication strategies like more for marketing purposes, instead of really living it?

Jessica
We're provocative, so we're really not scared to actually put ourselves out there and use provocative words. We are all about breaking the norm. So, for example, using wordings which usually don't use, like: "Schlappschwanz" (engl. "Limp-dick"), which is something where people in Germany are like, "oh, okay, that's a vulgar word!", but this is how you get the attention of the people. So, by standing out by taking the things with ease, and yeah..

Ricarda

Okay, nice. And last but not least, did the corona crisis had influences on you like the internal processes regarding being creative? And yeah, the decision making?

Jessica

Oh, no, not really. Corona has taught us one thing is that through this online world, you can do everything that doesn't matter where you are. So yes, we were at home office. Yes, we couldn't see each other all the time. But that doesn't mean anything, really. So it made us closer, it made us think more out of the bubble. So, I would say no, and since our life is for 95%, everything we sell is online. It made no difference no.

Ricarda

Thank you so much for your time and your insights. It was really, really interesting. And yeah, I just wanted to ask you, is there anything you would like to add any last thing you want to mention or correct or whatever?

Jessica
No.

Appendix I: Interview Transcript R3 with Katrin Engel from Ooia (English Version)

 Ricarda

Great, thank you, Katrin. Yes, first of all it's about your person anyway: What is your position at Ooia? And how long have you been working there? And what made you work at Ooia?

Katrin

Um, exactly. So my name is Katrin Engel. I've been with Ooia for exactly a year now. I am the senior brand manager, which means that I am responsible for practically everything, not everything obviously, but I am responsible for all the channels, our marketing, meaning how we present ourselves, how we reach new people, how we can retain and inspire our existing customers. It's about cooperation, PR, social media, all these topics, in order to somehow position Ooia to the outside world and show it exactly as we would like it to be, so to speak. And what convinced me at Ooia ... I started looking for a new job after my parental leave last year. Before that, I was in marketing for years, also in the startup area. That's how I know Julia ... well and then I was looking for a new job and I actually decided not to go to the startup scene again, to be honest. But then I somehow pricked up my ears again at Ooia, they were looking for someone like me at exactly the time and then read a little through what they were doing. And then the combination of the charismatic founders, because I've always appreciated who I work with…this is important to me and that they somehow represent good values, that actually convinced me. I found the product cool and also aesthetic and somehow innovative, so that interested me. That convinced me. I think I'm someone who likes to work with products that I somehow like myself. Now, I don't think I would fitting in the area, I don't know FinTech or apps or something. I'm more of a consumer type. And also this whole topic of working independently of time and place, which was what made me give some thought as a young mom. When I say I'm looking for a new job, it was like "Okay, what are you getting into now? What kind of work? What work culture? " Exactly, and then I applied, and then it worked out.

Ricarda

Nice! Um, yes, I can understand very well. So what is it like, how would you define in your words what Ooia does and what Ooia's values are? What drives the business, so to speak? Please explain in your own words.

Katrin

So roughly summarized, I would say you get products at Ooia that make your everyday life easier, especially women's everyday life, or however you define yourself. But products such as period underwear or nursing bras, which are often, you have to say, neglected markets, where little innovation happens, so to speak. And, that's exactly what it's about, that's basically what you get. And the whole thing is basically based on three pillars that Kati and Christine have defined for their company. One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics. The second pillar is simply the economic profitability, and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work. And these are basically three pillars that must never be neglected in the decision-making process. That was actually what I found most interesting back then. Well, because we could of course easily say we are now expanding into the USA, but that would, for example, certainly contribute to social change and economic efficiency, but currently simply contradicts with the family-friendly, because they would have to travel far too much, or we would all have to travel way too much or something. And then it would almost collapse. You could also say we start producing, I don't know, a great shoe or whatever, but does the world need another shoe? It probably would somehow bring good money, but does it also represent social change? So the things we do have to somehow meet these three factors. And I think that's done very smartly. Of course, we can also do a lot of things that are kind of nice, but which may not necessarily help the company to stay economically stable. That's why I actually find it very smart to say that these are the three basic pillars, and decisions are also made on them, or decisions are made on the basis of them.

Ricarda

Yes, that is very interesting that you have already mentioned that. I will come to that later when we will talk about how you make decisions, etc. Now, first of all to the general ... Do the terms brand activism or socio-political advocacy mean something to you? Or are these terms that are somehow relevant, also to Ooia? Were they relevant to you? Or are there any other terms that you would use instead?

Katrin

Well, the terms themselves are of course familiar to me. And I think that as a corporate strategy you can easily be able to present yourself a little artificial (meaning unauthentic), but it has to come very, very deeply from you so that you can implement it really well. Can you, of course, somehow rattle off the multiplication tables that I say purpose topics or purpose stories and that will certainly work. But to make it fully believable, you have to, I think Kati and Christine have that, you simply cannot be afraid of addressing very difficult and complex and complicated topics. So I don't know if you've followed the Instagram channel a bit, but you can say that it's also a product of ours. Because they (the two founders) really go deep, discuss very profound topics, invest a lot of time and energy and simply because it comes from heart, because it is so important to them. And I think you notice that and that is what makes the company successful. Compared to those who rather just switch on the typical machine and just do their homework in this area.

Ricarda

Yes, definitely! Yes, that has already answered my next question in a way. It is whether such theories play a role for you as an organization and how you would describe Ooia's socio-political engagement?

Katrin
So, I don't think the two of them are actually coming together, or it's not the case that we actively sit down and think about how we can somehow ... So I don't think that these are topics that we somehow read up to in theory and then apply, but there is such a strong DNA within Ooia that it is actually clear. I believe that it is therefore .. difficult to .. I don't think I have such a good answer to be honest, because it is not that one said that is now a theory, or that is a term and we try that, maybe it will work for Ooia, so to speak. But it all started with the thought and with the inner need from the beginning onwards. And I think everyone who starts working for Ooia, also shares these values and somehow this passion for such topics. And I think to make it really authentic, it is very, very tedious and very tough. Because…just because someone like Kati and Christine, for example, are very good in storytelling and creation about feminist issues or whatever, that doesn't mean that more people are buying. Yes, and it is not absolutely necessary that people go to the shop immediately and spend money. If you would judge on regards to that, then you probably wouldn't continue doing this. But the long-term effect of how authentically a brand is perceived, how it keeps itself profitable, how seriously it gets taken, I believe that's how the resulting sales resolute in the end. So, I think that if you look at it from a KPI point of view only, you would probably say, boor, I put too much time into it. What does the output look like? How can we measure that people actually order as a reaction to all of that? But if you only rate it by that, then it's probably too much work. But I think the long-term effect actually pays off for the company.

Ricarda
Yes, I hope so too. But I am firmly convinced that it pays off in the long term. So, would you say it was a conscious decision when the two of them ... So, it says on the website that it was a conscious decision when the two started off the business with a purpose and wanted to push for change, right?

Katrin
Yes, definitely.

Ricarda
Okay. So, how would you say you live that within the company, so you stand up for feminism, women empowerment to the outside world and educate about it. How is it presented within the company ... well, you've already mentioned flexible working hours, etc., that it worked out for you and that was one of the reasons why you started working at Ooia in the first place. Are there any other points? Or are there any additions that you would like to say about it?

Katrin
When it comes to the topic ... you mean now, how about the work culture ...?

Ricarda
Exactly or generally, in other words, what you represent and communicate to the outside world, how do you live or realise it within the company?

Katrin

For us, a lot of things ... Interestingly, I had that conversation with a colleague just today. I believe that we take a lot of things for granted that are not at all taken for granted elsewhere. Hmm, so for example we talked about it before, it was about working independently of time and place, and we were writing some content on that topic giving tips about it. And then I said, well, the absolute basis for this is principally that you have unconditional trust in each other, because we don't track working hours. So, I don't have to log in or check in somewhere or anything. Kati doesn't care when I work or from where. So, Kati is my superior, and then my colleague said: "Yes, but that's obvious, so we really don't need to add that anymore." And I believe that we sometimes assuming things which are absolutely not the standard in other work environments and companies. For instance, I heard from some people that during Corona they got quite nervous for working remotely all the time and that they had to report to their bosses every evening: "What did I do today?" Or always had to make sure that they keep their button green on Slack so that it looks like they were online the whole time, even though they may have been doing something different for half an hour. Who cares? In the end it is important that you do your job. What feels very natural for us, does not feel the natural for everyone I think. And as I have already mentioned, we can work anywhere and anytime. What applies to Christine and Kati also applies to us. And we have a new colleague, and he explained to me just this week: "My sister is in town, she wanted to have coffee with me, but I'll be online again later obviously." and so on. So I said to him: "Do what you want. You don't have to explain that to me. And I really don't care. I know that you do your job. You only start checking if you get the feeling that someone isn't doing their job or if strange things happen or something. But as long as everything is going well, I am not questioning at all that you are working." It was really difficult for him to accept that. So he said, he would always have such a strong urge to explain that although he would stop working early one day, he will definitely make up for it the next day. "Yes, do it like that…It does not interest me. That sounds really harsh now, but I believe you." And I believe that this is actually something that both employers and employees have to learn: to trust each other and to be able to make use out of that trust. So, for me it is really comfortable because, for example, I can easily pick up my daughter from school in the afternoon without feeling guilty. And when she sleeps I can sit down for an hour in the evening or I start to work very, very early in the morning sometimes or so. That allows me to be a team lead and be able to still manage to lead the area without having the feeling that something is falling behind. So I think, for that matter, we live (by our values) pretty well. But be also talk a lot about specific topics. We have leadership meetings in which insights are shared and we get educated indeed... I think if it wasn't for Corona, so to speak, and we had more events like this or team events and so on. I'm sure that more things like that, where the point is that we learn more about certain things or whatever would happen. And I believe the topic of acceptance is pretty important, too. Everyone can come as they want, can wear what they want. I think that's something very obvious for us anyway. But even if, for example, you have phases in life where you cannot perform one hundred percent, with Ooia you are able to just say it. And then it's just like that for a few weeks and everyone knows where you stand, and I have the feeling that it's really well implemented. And everything else we talk about comes very naturally, which we might communicate to the outside world as well, but where we don't talk about every day. So there are certain values that guide us how we work and how we treat each other. I would say that it is lived (implemented) very well.

Ricarda
Okay, very good, good to hear. So, how do you decide, because you have clearly defined your topics, how do you decide when there is a certain event…If there is some event coming up like, for example, Black Lives Matter as a big movement. How do you decide within your company if and how and which position to take publicly? Do you have certain criteria, like

"these topics, we do we also talk about them in public"? Or "these are topics to unrelated to us"? How does that decision-making process look like?

Katrin
That's an interesting question. I think with this you are again and again in a discovery phase. Because, you always have to evaluate if it's about jumping on a bandwagon or what are the issues that you stand for? Well, that's why I find this question difficult. I think we get challenged with this question every now and then again. But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something. And Christine and Kati cover a lot of different topics in our (Instagram) stories, that's a little bit like…you know, the stories are just a bit more free and independent compared to our other channels. So everything else (meaning the other content) is of course very Ooia-related and very product-related in the end. But especially in the stories a lot of things are being discussed, there are actually no limits, I would say. So where we really get involved as Ooia, it's mostly with topics that just go very well with us. Well, we work together with the CIJ, it's the "Center For Intersectional Justice". A lot of it deals with feministic issues. We also collaborated with "Wash United", it was about period poverty and so on. There are things where we just know very clearly, okay, that matches us one hundred percent, but of course there are also things where you have the feeling that you would jump on a bandwagon, and we normally do not actively engage in. I think it's a discovery phase, but I would say there is almost no limit in the stories.

Ricarda
Okay, and the story is run purely by the two founders, so to speak, and there … yes, the decision-making process just takes place with them, you are not involved as a team?

Katrin
Yes, exactly.

Ricarda
How is that, are you sometimes put under pressure? Like "Why don't you comment on this issue, on this conflict?". For example, the Palestinian-Israel conflict or something? There are always issues that come up. Especially, because you usually express yourselves a lot in the social media, do you get pressured? How do you deal with it?

Katrin
I believe that as soon as you stick a big toe into one area, that you are somehow engaged with, then you are committed and there is no way to stop. Then, it means immediately, but why? So, imagine you are committed to one cause, e.g. to feminism, then don't let yourself seen with a take-away coffee mug ever again. So as soon as you stand up for something, you get the feeling you must cover all areas 100 percent, but that's just not how it works. I think you really need to develop a thick skin and stay true to yourself, and know: "Okay, this is a topic that I want to and can deal with, or is it really?" Look, even as a company, you can't deal with all topics. And then you just have to stay cool and react cool when it's just not your area. Because theoretically you can draw attention to a hundred grievances in the world. But in the end, we also sell products, so to speak, so you have to create a bit of a balance. What are our topics and which are not?

Ricarda
Yes, very interesting. But is that something you decide within the company? Or who has it … if, for example, there is a post saying: "why don't you position yourself to that topic", or "why

haven't you said anything about it now?", or "what is your opinion on it", whatever…? So, put it simple, confrontation comes from the outside. What happens within your company then? Because there is very, very little literature about that, so nothing really.

Katrin
I think it depends a bit on the size of the company. We are still small, with us it is done very quickly. We either write a mobile message, for example, or Kati and Christine decide directly. They are actually very, very involved, which is a bit unusual, because many Instagram accounts are operated by a social media team or the customer service team or something. So, our two founders are already very, very involved and can therefore react themselves just in the moment. Sometimes there is an inquiry or something, but I would say that also happens in a non-hierarchical way, very easy and quick. But there are no complex structures or anything like that defined yet. I think it's depending on company a lot. We're just small enough to not needing it yet.

Ricarda
How many people are you? Like 20, right?

Katrin
I think about 25, something between 25 and 30.

Ricarda
Okay, wonderful. Then, I actually already asked most of the questions. So, which channels do you use to communicate? You have mentioned Instagram ..?

Katrin
Exactly, Facebook runs along a bit. Email marketing is important to us. And of course the website. But we're not on TikTok. We do LinkedIn a little bit, but that's about.

Ricarda
E-mail marketing, do you have a newsletter there and do you inform your readers in general? Or do you place your products there somewhere between topics that you are involved in? Or how does it look like?

Katrin
It depends. Once we have newsletters that are more product and sales-oriented. And then we have newsletters that deal with more content-related topics. For example, we had a campaign for the "International Women's Day", where we thought, okay, a lot of people just go like this: "Okay, tell us your story, what happened to you? What happened to you unjustly? Or so… Then we thought okay, a hundred other channels do that too. We might think more ahead and then we came up with a campaign, where we recorded common prejudices against women and how you have a quick-witted answer to them. Because it is often the case that in that moment, you just let it go and later you think: "Boor, shit, I would have liked to have had a good answer, but didn't have one at the time." Then we thought okay, we'll give you a few answers. What kind of typical answers can you give? For example, (when someone says): "Women don't even want to be in leading positions or so". What is a good answer to that? And often you are not prepared and we thought…it was actually very well received, and we also had that in the newsletter. It also had a high opening rate, that is, those who ... things like that are really appreciated, when you take the extra effort to produce content like this. When you create such content, you also try to spread it on a cross-media level.

Ricarda

Great, yes sounds good. Um, then again…about possible reactions to your point of view, which you represent to the outside world. You always have to expect everything, so sadly online you get some negative reactions. So the question is, if you are running something bigger, a bigger campaign or something, do you think in advance what kind of reaction you might get and how you in turn will react to it? Do you have an action plan or do you ignore it? So how do you deal with that?

Katrin

Sometimes you are already a bit internally prepared for those comments. But genrally speaking we are still in a very cool place I think. So with us, criticism is often explained that way or relatively factual or something. So we have little to do with the really tough internet trolls. That happens very rarely with us. That is why…at the moment, we do not really have the very critical cases. We have a cool community. So there are sometimes, especially when you have addressed topics like Corona vaccination or something,…then sometimes there are people turn up as vaccination opponent. So, you just have to react in a cool way then. Also, you need to decide if you want to spend your time with that in the end of the day and with whom to deal with, and with whom to discuss and with whom not. But with that, too, I think it's just a question of company size. We are still small enough for that. We can actually solve such things spontaneously very well. I think when you are in a corporation, the world looks very different, because there are very often loops, a hundred of loops. People have to approve this, approve that, approve everything before you have a good answer ready for social media. That would take far too long and I think they will have to prepare themselves completely differently for such circumstances.

Ricarda

Yes, exactly. That means, how many people are you in communication, in the department that you are head of?

Katrin

Well, in our Brand Team, we are five or six now. But let me put it this way, as we are so actively involved in social media, it's also a lot of customer service that has to deal with it. Because when customers write, "Hey, I have some problem with my package." Or so… So I would say there are a handful of people involved.

Ricarda

Okay. Regarding the outcomes then, and more or less about your engagement. What influence, I mean, did you say a bit at the beginning by describing why you are with Ooia. But what impact does Ooia's commitment have on the employees? And also, what impact in general, according to your commitment, I'll just call it commitment, (I somehow have to break it down) …to other stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, society. How would you describe the impact?

Katrin

Well, I think you can actually… I do believe that this whole empowering topics, we can already see that many people are also inspired by it. And at some point text us: "It's really cool, because of you I had the courage to do this or that" or something like that. So we really often get something back. And I have the feeling that they (the founders) have a role model function. So getting people inspired to see things differently or to enlighten them or so. We get a lot of feedback via social media and the feedback is really good. I believe that it also exudes or represents trustworthiness for people who want to work with us, who then simply

know who they are dealing with. And if you stand up for certain topics online, then you cannot behave completely different and so on. Well, I do think that this is also a door opener for many things, for example how to communicate with each other and so on. So, I would almost throw everything in one pot. Everything concerning our team, as well as customers, as well as people who just follow us. I think it applies to everyone.

Ricarda
I could also imagine that there is somehow a bit of a different mentality when working with suppliers, for example, when you know that it has a purpose, that there is a different motivation behind the working relationship.

Katrin
Yes, definitely. Yeah of course.

Ricarda
Super exciting. So, what influence does that have on your business, that you represent certain values etc.?

Katrin
It definitely has an impact on which products we launch, for example. Well, we could, we have now built a brand, and of course we could now just do a thousand things that make good money, for example. Well, we could just sell something else under the brand name Ooia. But the aim is that all products somehow solve a problem, that they are problem solvers. And at that moment, it already has an impact on company decisions.

Ricarda
That means it will always be, so your values, what you stand for, are always taken into consideration, for every business decision you make?

Katrin
Exactly.

Ricarda
Yes, so that comes first and then we look at how to expand? How could we introduce more problem solvers ..

Katrin
Yes, you always have to meet these three categories first.

Ricarda
Yes, very interesting. How do you stay authentic and unique? Especially if more and more companies will pick up similar topics in the near future?

Katrin
Well, I think the difference is little things…so, everyone can create good content, we all know how social media works, we all know what can be done there. But I think what you can't easily copy is people. Well, for example, on Twitter or LinkedIn people don't follow Tesla, but rather follow Elon Musk or are fascinated by Steve Jobs, not Apple. So people often want to follow people and that is something that you cannot just imitate. You can't just bake a Kati and Christine. And then say, do it like they do it. I don't think it's that easy. I think that's the difference to many other brands that try and do it well, but these are things that you can't take

from us. Everything else you just have to decide to spend the time on. So, it's simply a company decision to say, we also invest time in it because articles have to be well researched and well prepared. And just writing a post here and there, that doesn't work, because then you shoot yourself in the knee, then you'd better just leave it. As a company, you have to decide to say, I provide time or time resources or my people somehow get this and that on hand to do such things well. Yeah, I don't know if that answers the question, but ...

Ricarda
Yes, wonderful! So that actually means ... you always have to somehow balance the business. You have to survive, too. You want to survive in order to keep pushing for change...

Katrin
The (...?) is just like other e-commerce, yes we analyse a lot and we want to sell, but there is always this other component involved.

Ricarda
Super exciting. To what extent has the Corona crisis influenced you internally and why?

Katrin
Actually, Ooia was comparatively very well prepared, I have to say. So, because this location and time-independent working agreement was a core element beforehand, everyone was prepared for a lot of digital work anyways. Communication channels were designed so that you don't necessarily have to sit in one room together. So, I believe that, to be honest, it was relatively easy to implement. The big challenge is of course when you grow as a company and we were growing at that time. And you have a lot of new people that you just have to see how the onboarding process can be as intense as sitting in the office with someone. Well, it does make a difference, so when I started, I basically had a colleague who was by my side, or who was mainly supposed to onboard me. And then we kind of talked every day. And after a few days Kati said to me, to be honest, you spend too little time together and that was at a time Corona was quite around and we couldn't always see each other. And we made sure, we took a lot of time to work with each other, even if it was on the screen. And through this we were able to build a good relationship, but I also heard from many friends that the thing in these, which is also super difficult, is to get new people on board and build a relationships if you just get together for quick digital meetings, so…. So, I think, because Ooia was comparatively very well prepared. Well, it didn't come like a big shock like: "oh my god, now we all have to sit in front of the computer at home." In the end, it wasn't that bad for us.

Ricarda
Yes, that's right. Okay, there are still any ..

Katrin
It also has a lot to do with topics of trust ... well, it was for many, for many managing directors and so on, I think it was difficult to let go and say okay, my people now work from home. Now I can no longer see them sitting there, now I can no longer see what they are doing or no longer tracking or something. And I think that was already such a small, painful process for many and it just didn't exist in that sense before.

Ricarda
Yes, exactly, well, I also think your working model is really great. Are there any additions? Because then I would stop the recording right away. Are there any additions that you still… do you want to say anything else? Can you think of anything else?

Katrin

No, I just think that it ... I've already said it. So, if you want to stand for more with your company than just your product, then it has to be really, very deeply anchored in your DNA, otherwise you lose more with it than you do well, then you better leave it. So I think, that you then imagine it to be easier than it is and then you do it badly, and that is recognised too quickly these days. Then no one will buy your products anymore. For that, I think, this whole generation that is coming now is too sensitised to what is fake and what is meant seriously and so on. And I think if you just think my product is actually embodying something completely different, but we also have to do something social somehow, or we have to bring in some purpose and so on. If that's your approach, it's difficult. I think it really has to be anchored very, very deeply in the DNA and then you can do it well. I think that would be my final sentence.

Appendix J: Interview Transcript R4 with Anna Mehlem from True Fruits (English Version)

Anna
Looking forward.

Ricarda
Yes, me too. I mustn't anticipate too much, so let's just start with that. Then we can talk about it again afterwards. Okay, so first of all, you know my Master thesis'...the title is: "Brands Taking a Stand and Socio-Political Issues: A Qualitative Study of Organisations Behind the Scenes". That means it's more about you and what you think about it than from the customer side. That's why it's so much more valuable that I can have an interview with you and really find out more about what goes on behind the scenes with you. So, let's start with you. So first of all about you. What is your position at True Fruits? When did you join? And why did you decide to apply at True Fruits?

Anna
Well, I've been here for about 2 3/4 years now, so a bit longer. I also did an internship here before. And my job is in product management for marketing, we also have a product manager in buying. And I sort of look after all the projects that we implement, whether it's new products that are to be included in the standard range, or limited editions that we launch, or new flavours that are only available in stores for a limited time. I take care of that and try to implement the whole thing with my colleague from buying, so that we can keep to all the timings, so that the end product is also on the market at some point, and it doesn't just remain an idea. And why did I choose Truefruits? For me, it was very important to work in a place that I identify with, that I think is cool. And at that time I approached it from the customer's point of view and thought to myself: "Somehow triuefruits is super cool and they always write such cool texts on their bottles. I have to apply there and it's not that far away." And then I applied for an internship and it actually worked out. And my main intention was, okay, I want to work for a brand that I find one hundred percent authentic and cool and where I want to know what's behind it. And that was the reason why I'm sitting here now and so I know what's behind truefruits.

Ricarda
Okay, cool. So if you were to describe it in your words, what exactly does True Fruits do? Or what is True Fruits?

Anna

So actually quite banally, we make juices, we make smoothies, the cooler term or the cooler category of juices. We make smoothies/juices, we also make brand new ginger shots in glass bottles, which is also a USP (Unique Selling Point) of ours. That's what it says in such a dry and boring way, and our mission at the beginning was to make smoothies a bit lifestyle-ready and no longer appeal to this "mum and dad sit at the breakfast table and toast with OJ" category.

Ricarda
Okay, so would you say there are clear goals and values for True Fruits?

Yes, totally, it's..., as you can almost call it our slogan: "truefruits, no tricks." We always say we don't take ourselves too seriously, but we take our product all the more seriously for that. This means that the quality of our product is our top priority. This "truefruits, no tricks", we use 100 percent fruit, sometimes vegetables, in our vegetable smoothies, but we would never add additives, sugar-like things. That means we put so much time into the development of a product until it really tastes one hundred percent perfect and we find the best mango among all 5000 mango varieties. And we don't take ourselves too seriously when it comes to communication. So "truefruits, no tricks" is what I would say are the values we represent here 100 percent.

Ricarda
Okay, so your own values match the values of True Fruits?

Anna
Totally. Well, I think the most important thing for me is that I work for a company where what I implement is also 100 percent in line with my opinion. So here (at truefruits) it's really the case that everyone can freely express their opinion and everyone can freely express their values. And that everything is actually in line with the values of the employees here, because that's what makes us special and, above all, because a lot of personality flows in here and it's not a predetermined line that has to be followed, but the opinion, no matter which employee it is, whether it's a trainee, an intern or a senior position, every opinion is equal and every personal value also counts here.

Ricarda
Ah, cool. I'll come back to that later, but first something more general. You don't necessarily have to refer only to truefruits, but I'm interested in that in general. Do terms like brand activism or socio-political advocacy mean anything to you or are you familiar with other terms? We can refer to True Fruits in the next question, once in general and then you can refer to True Fruits?

Anna
To be honest, we don't have such terms as goals. So we don't say...well, a typical term that comes up again and again for me, for example, is Brand Awareness. The brand must be perceived. We need good brand awareness and everything is geared towards performance. And when we talk about socio-political... advocacy... I guess that probably means a bit of social or political aspects under the point of sustainability, how do we deal with the future, how do we produce our products? How do we express ourselves, whether it's political or etc.? We don't really have such concepts here, we just orientate ourselves according to them, so it rings a bell, but rather from my student days and not from my working days, so to speak. But I think **brand awareness** and…what also comes up all the time, also in the professional world, is **political correctness**, at every corner, which is hotter than ever before.

Ricarda

Yes, that's interesting, it's not a question from my questionnaire. So you also say that, because I mean, you've been around for a few years now, but above all the founders have been doing this for a while now, that they take public stances. And they also say that it's (political correctness) simply gets stronger? So probably also because of social media?

Anna
Totally! Very sad, but true, things that we did six years ago...there are some things we would perhaps no longer do in the same way, because the consequences are probably a bit bigger now or we see the whole thing from a different angle now. Because six years ago many issues were simply not yet on the table. Nobody cared and realised back then, and now everything is seen and everything is criticised. And you can basically only do everything wrong.

Ricarda
Yes, yes, exactly, that's what individual activists or people you follow on Instagram say, you get that too.

Anna
Totally.

Ricarda
Okay, then one more time exactly. Okay, you've already mentioned the terminology, so something like brand activism is not necessarily a term that constantly occurs in your everyday life, but rather brand awareness. But what exactly drives you to stand up for political or socio-political issues and to express yourselves? Why did you decide to be so controversial in your communication? And to what extent do you also live this within your company?

Anna
For us, I think it's basically first of all that we only do something on a topic if we find it interesting and if we ourselves are 100 percent of the opinion. That means, for example, when there's a wave going around, like on Instagram on Black Tuesday when everyone posted those black tiles, where every company jumped on the bandwagon. If we think that's so good, then we'll do it. But we don't do it because everyone is doing straight. And now I've digressed a bit....

Ricarda
What drives you to stand up for certain issues? And then I had the question: How do you live this within the company?

Anna
For us, it's like this: we do what we feel like doing and, let's say, we always keep the consequences in mind, but they don't slow us down. That means that if there is a topic that interests us, that interests our founders, then we take it up and then we give our opinion on it. If we stand behind it 100 percent and we say okay, that sounds right for us, …because we don't have any extremists or people who tend in any extreme direction working with us... And we say okay, for us this is the right thing to do, we feel that this is our opinion, then we also express ourselves and if we say that this is relevant for us in our private and professional lives, then we do it. And we also have our own policy, especially in the social media area. For example, when we launch a limited edition, which often expresses political statements or something else...Then you always say "okay, do we think this is good enough that we would send it to our friends? Would you share with your best friends? Do you think this is funny enough or interesting or important that you would share the post and say hey look, we as truefruits just did something totally awesome, you have to check it out." And if that's not the case, if we don't get off on it,

then we don't do it. Even if we think now, for example, the federal election is coming up soon, probably a lot of companies will do something on the federal election...but we would now say "okay, that's definitely a topic we could gain attention with, or as other companies would probably say, we can perform well with that", but we say "we absolutely don't feel like doing anything on that. We don't want to comment." Because our main goal is not to perform well, our main goal is to stay true to our line. Then we don't do anything about that. And yes, that's actually how it is within our company. So here, a lot of emphasis is placed on supporting everything we do. And that such statements really come from us is also a point, why we are not working with agencies! Because nobody knows truefruits as well as we do! We are truefruits. We are truefruits' communication. We shape that too. And yes, that's why it's like this here, for example, if someone speaks out very strongly against a topic and says: "Hey, guys, if we do this, then I have a very strong stomach ache", or "I can't reconcile this with myself", then we don't do it! So if the team doesn't feel comfortable with it, cause they are also the ones who have to pay for it if something goes wrong, let it be with communication, in community management, e-mails or other channels, then it won't be implemented.

Ricarda
Ah, yes, that's very exciting! That already picks up a bit on my next questions. About the process behind it. How do you as an organisation decide on which socio-political issues to publicly represent your point of view and do you have precise criteria? I think you have already more or less answered that, but maybe a little bit in the sense of...you said at the beginning that your values are simply to be true. That is, just to be true. To what extent do your values, goals and values perhaps play a role in facilitating this decision-making process of what you want to stand up for or what you want to commit to? Maybe you have another addition?

Anna
Exactly, so once again very briefly about the process. For us, the idea can come from anywhere. And of course we always have brainstorming sessions where we ask: "OK, what else can we do now? We need new limited editions, or what theme do we express ourselves on?", and then we usually come up with a rough idea that we then work out. And then every idea that is bigger or that somehow moves in a socio-political... direction is discussed again with the management. Because that is also a very important part for us. Inga, Mark and Nick, our three founders, who have of course been with us since the beginning and are still very much involved, which of course makes a difference. Because they are still involved in everything and put their heart and soul into it but of course leave us our freedom, but still always support us. And especially with such difficult decisions, which we perhaps cannot simply make as employees, "do we really say anything about it now? Yes, because we often know that if we do something about it, there will follow shitstorm. We will definitely have people who will hate us and we know that if we have the founders' go, then it's okay if the shitstorm follows. Then we know, "Okay, our three founders have also agreed and they're kind of fine with that too." And, yes exactly, that is somehow also a point, as I already said, that we always remain completely true to ourselves and yet never become too boring. So that is also very important to us. We always want to test the limits a bit, but also in a good way, as long as a smoothie can do it. Because you have to think about it, so many people discuss about us and get upset about us and if you're really honest, they all get upset about stupid smoothie, a fruit puree. A fucking boring fruit puree where everyone takes their aggression on. That's another point for us, because for example, I think is very good: We never show people in our communication and never show the faces. That is perhaps another value that we represent. Because we say that there have often been situations where we have got to know brands personally, and that's another personal thing, and then you see the people behind the brands, then of course you associate this person with the brand. And if that person is not likeable, then the brand is out of favour. Everybody knows that

a person is either unappealing or not. And that's why we say in our communication...it's not like, "Here's Tom, this is our social media turefruits Tom, he's always in the stories." There will never be a face in our stories, at most an arm, so that people don't say, oh, I don't like truefruits because I don't like Tom's nose or something. No, our employees are very personal and deeply involved here, but in the communication with the outside world there is no person who is somehow in the focus or who is showing the face. That's the bottle. So all our actions are only projected onto the bottle, which is also quite funny.

Ricarda
Yes, that's interesting, because you can see it a lot with other brands, for example Jobs for Apple, or Benzos for Amazon. There, the CEOs offer just as much space as the actual company for reaction. And with you, it's really limited to the pure brand and not so much to the founders, even though they are always the same, have been the same three founders for years. Super interesting! Then I wanted to know a bit more in detail who exactly is involved in these decision-making processes, where you position yourselves, maybe especially in situations that arise? For example, it can be any topic, but Black Lives Matter, which was then suddenly in the media, etc.? It can really be anything that has come up recently, which is perhaps more of a German issue? So who exactly is involved in the decision-making processes? Because these are usually relatively quick decisions. It's not a long process where you can think about it, like with the limited editions. It's probably a bit different there. Are there differences in the decision-making processes? Do you have precise action plans, so to speak? Do you always proceed in the same way? You just said that the founders usually sign off on everything in the end. But who is involved in the processes at the beginning? And how do you structure yourselves? And because you also said at the beginning that actually every one of you is in agreement when you position yourselves? How do you make sure that everyone is really involved in each process?

Anna
Well, mostly all the communicative decisions are made in our marketing department. We have three departments: Sales, Business Operations and Marketing. That means that when such topics come up that we then comment on, in terms of communication. Then we actually only do it in Marketing. Unless it's something totally critical. Then, of course, we sit down with the others and say, "Hey, can we do something about this?" Or if there's a shitstorm, of course we also get involved. But when we decide to speak out, the impulse usually comes from someone in marketing who has taken up the issue somewhere, regardless if he/she is in the management or our trainee. Then we have our marketing director, that's the dear Fee. She has the upper hand with us, she is also our communications manager. And then we sit down with her and there are usually five or six of us. That also happens in our office...we have an open space office. Then we all just slide together with the chairs. When we really feel, I would say we sometimes have a feeling, that a topic is coming up, then we drop everything else and say: "Okay, we'll sit down together now". And then we discuss the topic first. Then we usually sit there for an hour or an hour and a half and think: "Okay, from what point of view are we looking at the whole thing now and what do we want to achieve with it anyway? What is our message behind it?" Because for us, the whole thing always has to be well thought through. It can't just be good wording, which might be funny, but which might not work on a second level, but it has to be aligned. The best example was when Black Lives Matter happened, there was this scenario that everyone posted this black tile on Instagram. And then we also thought: "Are we going to comment on this? Or do we not comment on it?" Because we've been approached here so often about us being so racist and having such a bad image. "And if we do that now, then it's going to be so greenwashing." "Now you're posting this too and pretending to be the harmless ones", that's how we go through it in our heads. And in the end, however, the decision is being made by thinking: "What would we do as a private person now?" We think the action is right, we think

the action is good. It doesn't matter if someone thinks we're greenwashing and posting this just to jump on the bandwagon. If we personally would post it and say okay, I think it's good, then we'll do it as truefruits too, no matter what kind of reactions will come." Because we've talked everything through, and there's no catch to it, we're not getting ourselves into the jam with it. And most of the time it's like that. We think about it in small groups of five, I'd say, then the graphic designer gets right down to it, drops everything and writes the post. And then, before we present it to the management, we always have a complete concept. That means it's usually just a social media post. Then we have already created the finished post. We have written the caption for it. We have defined the hashtags for it and have already thought about possible reactions and questions that could come from the management. We send it to our group - all communication is done via mobile phone - then we send it to our group and try to get it approved. And most of the time it works quite well, because we have already thought about a complete concept beforehand. And often it's also the case that we say, "OK, if we don't have feedback in the next 15 minutes, we'll just do it." And then we also comment on it.

Ricarda
That has already answered a lot. Just one more question, because you said that the decision-making process at the beginning takes place in the marketing team. How many people are in the marketing department? Because there are three departments, and I understood the managing directors correctly? How big is the marketing team compared to the whole team, the whole company?

Anna
We are about eight people, I would say, but that includes two interns. And in the other departments, in sales, we are also about seven people with our sales representatives, I would say. And then we have two people in accounting, but that's a department on its own, and we have five people in purchasing and product development.

Ricarda
Okay, great. Good, you've just gone into it a bit, on which channels do you represent your opinion, i.e. social media, as you've just said? It's the channel you probably think about first, so you create your posts and the hashtags etc., right? So that's the most important channel? What other channels are there?

Anna
Well, social media is actually always the first channel that we take up, especially when it comes to impulse decisions. And our strongest platform is definitely Instagram. Facebook runs alongside it. But we're also doing more and more on Tiktok, but then less about socio-political topics and more about entertaining topics. Twitter used to be, I would say, or is still very politically charged, but it doesn't work so well for us anymore. That means Instagram is actually the strongest platform. And then the first impulse is always, of course, to bring something to the platforms. Another medium we still use, which we also use a lot, is our newsletter. But we only send out our newsletter when we have some important topics and when we have something new. Because we've never had discount codes or sales or anything like that. That means you never have this advantage of getting discount codes from our newsletter, but always just the news value. And...Yes, what is also an important platform for us is our bottle itself. We write new bottle texts on all our bottles every four weeks. Our bottle texts are our flagship. We have a lot of people sitting here who do nothing but writing texts all day. Of course, we also use the platform to express ourselves on important topics and not just for gimmicks. Just like our bottle as a limited edition. Of course, that needs a bit more lead time because the bottle has to get printed. But here, too, we sometimes express ourselves on important issues, including political

issues and other things. Another medium in our communication is poster campaigns. We have done a lot of it in the past. Where we have also expressed ourselves politically, I would say, and have strongly revealed our opinion. Of course, this creates different waves than when it's seen on a small bottle or on a social media post, when it hangs boldly in the middle of the city centre. But these are actually the platforms. So social media is always there!

Ricarda
Ok, sorry again, I just realised that I have to go back to the last question. About the decision-making process... If you are eight people in marketing, then you also sit together and brainstorm at the beginning, which means that it all takes place with eight people in one room? So none of it takes place anonymously? You have open communication in your company, so you don't...well, you mustn't give each other too much direction. So that's why or how does that take place?

Anna
When we're not in our home office, which is fortunately no longer the case, we sit in an open-plan office, which means that all of Marketing sits on one side and Business Operations sits on the other. But we as the marketing team can hear if someone in Business Operations talks about something. And in practice it's usually the case that we're sitting at the computer and suddenly someone says, hey, have you heard that topic XY? It is going through the roof! And then he says, okay, we have to do something about it. Okay, let's think about it! Then we just slide together with our chairs and think about it in marketing. And if, of course, someone else is doing something else at the moment, then he just goes away. But because everything is so open with us and we really do think things over in the heat of the moment, the other departments naturally notice too. And if someone wants to join in the discussion, they do. It doesn't matter whether they belong to the marketing team or not. And that's actually how it happens. We just slide together and don't somehow go into a separate room because we think that no one here should notice. It's like a kitchen call here, that we communicate everything openly.

Ricarda
Okay, that's also totally interesting. I think it's also very different from the old-established companies. Cool. Okay, you already hinted a little bit that you prepare yourselves for a possible reaction to it, in the sense that you think about what reactions a post or a campaign could trigger beforehand! Do you think about how you might react beforehand? Or do you go into more detail or how do you prepare for it? Or is there more preparation than just thinking about it? How exactly does that work for you?

Anna
Most of the time it's like this with us, funnily enough, that when we think something is coming, nothing usually comes. And when we think, oh, what's going to happen, then the shitstorm usually comes around the corner. So when we prepare a single social media post, which is just a post, we naturally go through it roughly in our heads, could something happen? What could the reactions be like? But then it's not the case that we write down an answer beforehand, and when the question comes, we have the answer ready. We rather do that if the situation comes. We actually always answer to normal posts and normal questions. Maybe that's another way of communicating with us. With us, every question is answered in a comment or in an email, and always within 24 hours. We have a 24-hour policy, for that matter. All e-mails are answered within 24 hours, all comments are answered within 24 hours and quality issues are answered within twelve hours. And yes, that's how we approach it. And then we often sit together as well. We have our community management, the staff who writes the comments, even in normal situations just by themselves. But when critical issues come up, four of us sit here and work on

an answer in a comment. Because of course, as we always act in all our communication, we always give a lot of thought to all the sentences that get posted or to all the wordings. And we have looked at the whole thing five times. And that's also how it is with critical comments and when we plan a major campaign and know in advance. "Okay, this and that will be coming soon, there will probably be several posts about it, there's a whole bottle for it in the shop or the posters are hanging in the cities", then we prepare ourselves more, then we prepare an FAQ. We think about what possible questions will come up or what possible insinuations will be made, and then we come up with a rough answer that fits that. Of course, you can never say 100 percent what's going to happen and we don't publish this FAQ...Exactly, and then we prepare a little bit for it so that we have ways of argumentation, but this preparing for what could come also usually helps us in the decision-making process: "Do we really want to do it?" Because when we ask ourselves these questions and possible insinuations that can come up and we don't have conclusive answers. Then we know "hmm...it might not be so good to do something about that topic." But in theory, time is always the decisive factor for us, and we always publish it and then think about what we're going to answer. So it's not a well thought-out plan that we usually have.

Ricarda
Okay, yes, interesting. And what you had already mentioned...sometimes you react to events or maybe also to reactions, so the reactions of your audience, I'll say. Do you sometimes not react at all, or how do you deal with it? If...do you just whip the next campaign out and go on, or how do you deal with it?

Anna
The nice thing about social media is that when a hot topic comes up and someone writes a hot comment that doesn't really demand an answer, but rather shows provocation, then it's usually the case that the audience fortunately discusses itself into the ground. And that's the point where we like to stay out of it. Because it's like this, when someone else already answers our question in a right way... For example, if a very banal question comes up: "Where can I buy this smoothie?", and someone else already writes underneath it, which often happens, then we don't answer anymore. Then we might forward the comment, but we always answer normal questions like that. But if someone writes underneath that "you are shit, I hate you". Then we might write a nice thank you or comment with a heart smiley or just ignore the whole thing. Then it's more like, we try not to offer a platform to those people who deliberately stir up and provoke a topic. In other words, we usually don't jump on what they throw at us. Because we know very well that the goal is for us to respond, so that they can escalate even more and that we can't get out of the situation, so that a discussion ensues that never ends. And sometimes these are times when we hold back, just as we would probably do in private, when we think, "this is too stupid for me to say anything". Then we don't say anything.

Ricarda
Okay, interesting. You have a very broad spectrum of topics that you really take up in your communication. I had already asked a little bit to what extent you live this. Because, for example, let's say you talk about, or you have talked about migration, for example, years ago... That was a huge thing. There was also a huge shitstorm, especially in Austria etc.. When you send such a message to the outside world, how do you deal with it within the company? Is there any way that you inform yourselves even more, or that you do some kind of workshops on the subject? Or anything else? Is there an example you can give? I know you recycle, for example, that's one of the things you really live. That means that this sustainability is also officially lived by truefruits. So you can also see that from the external perspective. But are there other topics that you really take up within the organisation?

Anna

Exactly the issue of sustainability is a big point. Then it's also often political issues. So it's really the case that when we manage an external campaign like this, we create it completely internally, i.e. really ourselves and not with some agency. That's what's really good for us, because no knowledge is getting lost, because in order to be able to speak skilfully on a topic, you first have to be an expert in the field yourself. And decide: "Is this relevant for us? Does it interest us personally? Is it compatible with us?" And then we do something about it. I think upcycling is a big thing. But the main thing for us is just to have fun. As simple as it sounds, when we're sitting here in the social media conference and someone has a wording and four people just have to laugh heartily. Then we know okay, pocketed, that's the thing. And we never want to lose the fun of it. And that's how it is when we think about any Limited or so. If we don't have fun with any subject, then it's not a good one. We know that if we don't have fun with it, then we don't put love into it, then we don't put enthusiasm into it. Then we know that it won't be a round thing. And if it's not a round thing, then we don't publish it. And yes, the interpersonal aspect is also a huge factor, I think that's also very important for the decision-making process, that no one here feels like "Cancel Culture".... No one here feels somehow cancelled in their opinion, which they can express. Everyone can say what they want without thinking, "Ohh, if I say that,...that probably won't be perceived well. Then I'd better keep my mouth shut."

Ricarda

I think that's very interesting, because that actually picks up exactly what you said, what your value is: "True Fruits" - to be honest, to really be with yourself. And that's how you make the decision. And you do it from your gut, because it's really what you hold as an opinion yourself. And how do you think you ensure that people express themselves freely? So, when a trainee starts working, it is simply an atmosphere in which there is a lot of questioning. Or do you actively say: "Why don't you express yourself? How do you think that comes about, that everyone feels comfortable right from the start and somehow expresses their opinion? How do you ensure that, as a company? Or does that come from the top, from the management? Because they are so involved, or engaging? Or how does that come about?

Anna

I think that, as you just said, the management is a big point for us. First of all, no one here is or has ever been addressed formally. There are no hierarchies here. Of course, there are those who have had more decision-making power here for a long time, but it's not like we're afraid to talk to anyone because they're in such a high position or because we're afraid to speak up to the bosses. The bosses are here at every party just like we are. And I think that's also a very big point why everyone dares to speak out. We also always say when we have job interviews. For us it's not a job interview, for us it's more comparable to a flat-sharing casting. We are looking for a new flatmate here. And we have to get along well with the flatmates not only on a professional level, he has to be able to deliver, but it has to be a good fit on a personal level too. We might have to share a few interests or maybe the other person will bring completely new qualities that are not yet in the team. When we arrive on Mondays we are asked first how we are doing. "How was your weekend?" We always have a team chat on Mondays, where we ask everyone. "What did you do at the weekend? And what was the best thing you have eaten on the weekend?", and that makes everything very private, and we also talk about very private topics here, and I think that's how you don't get the feeling that you're new here, even as a new person. I think that's the most important thing, that we try to give everyone a platform and include them, and when we're sitting here in a meeting and we notice that someone maybe doesn't dare to say anything. Then we say, "Hey, Jana, why don't you tell us what you think about this? And that's important, because we don't have interns so that we can say we have

interns, but so that they can be a real help for us. And for that they have to dare to express their opinion. It's all very, very personal here.

Ricarda
Okay, very interesting! What kind of impact would you say your engagement (I call it engagement now) has on the employees or other stakeholders? So, maybe any partners, suppliers in general, society? How would you describe it?

Anna
What exactly do you mean?

Ricarda
So, what influence does Truefruits have on the different stakeholders? So, by the fact that you are so political,... so what kind of influence does that have?

Anna
I think sometimes it does have an influence. We are approached by people, whether they are suppliers or external people we work with, whether they are investors or whatever... Of course, they know what they are getting into at the beginning. But I think it's also important that we are anonymous to the outside world because no one is shown, but still somehow so tangible, because we comment on everything and don't mince our words. But on a professional level, be it among suppliers or whatever, we have a totally private relationship, a totally personal relationship. For example, we have a policy when we write e-mails, unless it's a lawyer, but when a customer writes to us, we are on a first-name basis, we want to be on a personal level. We don't want to say here we are Truefruits and here you are. But we always want to talk to each other directly at eye level. And if any investor or stakeholder or supplier asks us a critical question, we would never give any answer to make them happy. Instead, we simply give our honest opinion. If he doesn't like it, if he doesn't like it, then maybe we're not the right partner. But we were honest and we gave an honest answer. I think the most important thing is that we can just always go to bed at night with a clear conscience. We stayed true to ourselves and we didn't prostitute ourselves for anyone in order to get something in return.

Ricarda
Okay. And what influence does that have on your business, that you always express yourselves so controversially?

Anna
It's a bit of a two-way street, I would say. I don't think it has a big influence on business in the retail business, because you're a bit stuck in the social media communication bubble and you only get one side of it most of the time. And that is this outrage society, this cancel culture society, which gets upset about everything and shares everything and only shares all the bad news and everyone who somehow jumps on such a topic because they think, if I now also participate, then it is somehow relevant. And then I'm relevant and I've expressed myself politically. Those are two completely different groups. We notice in retail that it definitely has no impact, if anything it has a positive impact. So we don't lose any sales because of it. As I've said before, people either love us or hate us, and I think the people who love us then are somehow bigger, and who think it's great that you don't just make a smoothie, but also speak out about things. And then there is this other side, the social media bubble. So we already notice, for example in our collaboration with influencers, that they are unsure about entering into a collaboration with us. "I've seen that this and that influencer has made negative comments about you. I don't know if I want to do anything with you guys because then I'll get all these haters

on my profile and I might then lose followers or get negative comments just because I'm collaborating with you guys." That's also very interesting to see, because there are some and others. The ones who clearly say, I think you're good, I say my opinion and whoever doesn't want to follow me anymore, shouldn't follow me. Then they're probably not a loyal follower of mine anyway. And the others who say "ahh no, that's a bit too hot for me. I don't want to do it.

Ricarda
Have you ever lost an influencer because of that?

Anna
Yes, I have. And not just once. It's true, but you notice that the more people talk about you, the more it has a positive effect instead of a negative one. We always say that even negative press is press and the more press, the better. But of course we also know that this sounds too banal, because of course really negative press is not good press. But that may be negative press in other eyes, but we are still true to ourselves. We think what we do is good. And we do, that's exactly one of the points of communication. We don't want to be "everybody's darling".

Ricarda
Then I wanted to ask you some questions, for example, I saw in one of your posts that you could only sell the bottles online, not in the supermarket. It was about Istanbul and you could only sell them online because supermarkets don't want to have politics on the shelves. So is that always an issue in general? So you have to look at which bottles you sell in shops and the rest you sell online? Because that would also be an influence of your communication on your distributors.

Anna
Yes, yes. But that's another topic that is developing over time. It wasn't an issue four or five years ago. But it's just that people are becoming more and more cautious. Retail is also becoming more and more cautious, because people are then also being approached in the market. And customers question the right of it to be standing in the shelves. And of course the retailers try to avoid any confrontation, they don't want to take any risks. And that is actually also an issue, so of course we announce it beforehand. Because of course the worst thing is to be in a dispute with the retailers, that doesn't do us any good, that doesn't do the retailers any good. But that was more of an exceptional situation, because the issue with the Istanbul Convention was of course already an issue, which was very political, and then we still say, even if we can't stand up for it in the supermarkets, which is of course a much larger quantity than in the online shop. We think the issue is so important. Then we just produce a very small quantity. And then we take on all this effort. We wanted to comment on this. We don't care whether the retailers want it or not. We do it anyway, that's exactly what we do, and it's noticeable that sometimes there's a bit of a headwind, or even quite banal complaints about bottle texts. Complaints about bottle texts or that a retailer doesn't want something on the shelf. But then it's more likely to be in individual stores than entire chains.

Ricarda
Okay, that's actually super interesting, because probably the main turnover is in retail and you probably sell less online. You know, can you tell me how much online, how much retail accounts for?

Anna
I can't tell you exactly. But think like 99.5 percent the retailers and maybe 0.5 percent or maybe one to two percent the online shop.

Ricarda

So you can't survive without your retailers. How do you communicate with them when you have a certain, or your topics are always controversial...? Do you know if there are certain supermarket chains...do you have certain contact persons? Or are certain supermarket chains totally critical? Or how do you deal with it in general? Or do they know okay, we have Truefruits on the shelf and they can do what they want and we take the bottles. Is this an issue at all, also in the decision-making process, what do you say about it? Do you think about it? For example, you also worked with Kaufland, the new bottles, the red bottles regarding menstruation. How does it work then? So you partly lose the retailers then?

Anna

Well, it's all done through our salesperson, who has been with us for years, and that means he has his contacts and his people, most of whom have been working with us for many years. And the fact is that we are the market leaders in the smoothie sector. Of course the trade knows that, the trade can see that. And that's why they are aware that when they sell Truefruits, it goes hand in hand with limited editions and bottle texts. Everyone knows that, and we actually do it a bit according to our feelings. When we think, okay, we have to coordinate this, because we want to be fair again, we don't want to let anyone walk into an open knife. Then we try to coordinate it beforehand, but unfortunately I'm not so deeply involved in the topic, because that's what the retail does. But you can't say across the board that I can bring everything to market XY and the other chain is totally conservative and doesn't allow anything. It's not like that. You always have to assess it a bit individually. We don't have a concrete scheme that we follow. We don't say that a limited edition gets launched every month and so on. It always comes about a bit randomly.

Ricarda

Okay, how do you integrate your communication into your business strategy? Was it a conscious decision to act the way you do? Has Truefruits always been like this or was that the consideration from the beginning? Or how did it develop? And to what extent is it integrated into the strategy nowadays?

Anna

This has definitely been the case since the beginning and has been communicated in exactly the same way for 16 years now. Which means that our brand was exactly the same 16 years ago, I would say, in the way it is communicated now. Sure, little things change, but we haven't restructured the entire communication or our brand. It all came a bit from the fact that Inga, Mark and Nik wanted to make smoothies but not in the typical marketing of "the perfect family sitting at the breakfast table". But we don't want the perfect family product, we want a product for everyone. And we are perhaps personally a bit more communicative, more provocative. Or we're not at a loss for words, we say what we think. And that's how it came about. And because the three of them founded the company from the bottom of their hearts and I don't think they gave much thought to what others might think, but simply what we were up for! And that was established by them and then passed on to all employees and the communication didn't really change much.

Ricarda

OK, but did you think at the beginning, OK, we'll make juices or smoothies, or did you say we want to be a platform where we can also communicate honestly? And we use juices for that, which suits us well, but could also have been another product. But we just want to wake up society somehow.

Anna

No, it actually came about because Inga and Marco were on a semester abroad in Scotland and had had a night of partying, and the next day they were totally hung over. They went to the supermarket and suddenly discovered smoothies. In Germany you only get juices, and somehow that's totally cool. Tastes delicious, is thicker than a meal. Afterwards I have a better mouth feeling... Have come back here to Germany and noticed that this really doesn't exist yet on the German market. Then the whole thing came out of a university project. And then they thought, okay, how do we fill the space on the bottle? There's a lot of space on it. What else can we use the space for? Yeah, then let's make the product even cooler and we'll still write cool stuff on it, because Nick, one of the founders, is a super good lyricist who has always cracked funny lines anyway. Let's use the space on the bottle so that you don't throw it away again straight away, but keep it and also have a bit of a chat while you drink the smoothie. And that's roughly how it came about, that you had the smoothie and then made a platform out of it.

Ricarda

Ah okay. Thank you. Then again a question about the future of True Fruits. How would you say you will stay authentic and unique? Because there is more and more competition with similar communication, not especially from the product, but from the way you communicate, there is more and more competition on the market. How do you deal with that? How do you want to shape the future?

Anna

I have to say that we don't really look left and right. We don't look around and copy. We try not to let ourselves be influenced too much and think that if others come up with something cool that we like as well, then we say it's cool, happy for them! I hope there will be more! We do not even see it as competition. Of course we react allergically to people copying us, which also happens sometimes. Not only with the product, but also in wordings or ideas. Then of course we don't like it, but on the other hand we feel a bit flattered. But we just stay true to ourselves by not trying to be someone else, because that might work better. There are many companies that grow much faster on social media, that probably act in such a way that they perform much better or run much more after the current trend. But then we don't care. Because at the end of the day, we always drive our line. We always do it the way we do it and that's how we're always consistently successful. And we really don't look to the right or left and don't really see anyone as competition.

Ricarda

Okay, cool, interesting. And then the last question very briefly about Corona. Do you have the feeling that it influenced you somehow? Are people in that time... or maybe they don't refer to the Corona crisis, because you already said that people in general have become a bit more critical? To what extent has the crisis influenced you or not only the crisis, however you see it? And why?

Anna

Well, purely in terms of business, it has actually influenced us positively, if you can put it that way, which makes sense. People in Lockdown naturally go to the supermarket more than they go out to eat or something. Vitamins are then the top priority. Of course, we are quite well placed with a smoothie. Um, because it's simply a relevant product at the moment, especially in retail. I mean, trade in general has boomed like never before. And otherwise, on an interpersonal or communicative level, you could almost say that because we were all in home office, spontaneous kitchen shouts, from which ideas arise when people talk to each other and the other person is listening, are no longer possible. And somehow, that's how we often come

up with ideas. Of course, that's no longer the case. It was just a bit sad because of the crisis with Corona, but nothing else in our communication has really changed.

Ricarda
Okay, thank you very much! I think I'm done with my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add? Is there anything where you somehow have the feeling that you have thought of something else that you would like to add? Or do you have a question?

Anna
I think one thing that keeps us alive here or that keeps us from getting bored here, which is probably very, very different from many other companies, is that we never work according to any plans. We don't have annual plans, we don't have half-year plans, we don't know at the beginning of the year how many Limited we have to launch so that we grow in comparison to last year or something. Most of the time we don't know more than a month before. So a lot of things really happen out of impulse, and I can say that very clearly because I do the project management. I don't have a ready-made plan. And we are also very quick in the decision-making process. And we don't set ourselves any goals. Yes, we don't really have any goals. And that's why we can all work very easily and well, because we don't have any pressure. We absolutely have to do something now, even if we don't think it's so good, but that's the goal of the year or something. Yes, well, I also find that very exciting. That we work in a very agile way, more like real time marketing. Although we don't really like to use such terms, but we react very spontaneously.

Appendix K: Interview transcript R5 with Michael Fritz from Viva Con Agua (English Version)

Ricarda
Can you introduce yourself as a person and explain what Viva Con Agua does?

Michael
I am Michael Fritz from Viva Con Agua e.V., which is a non-profit organisation, but now we are also a social business, or several social businesses and foundations, represented in eight countries worldwide, working for access to clean drinking water. There are still 569 million people without access to clean drinking water and 4.2 billion without access to decent sanitation and supplies. We are working for access to clean drinking water and that is why we are working on the ground and why we founded it ourselves.

Ricarda
What are your values and what drives you to work there?

Michael
We also work there because we are allowed to work very freely and we believe that we can change the world in a positive, joyful and loving way and that is our core. That we always stay positive and always try to transform, to always change the world positively.

Ricarda
In general: Do you know the terms "brand activism" or "socio-political advocacy"? If so, how do you define them? - Do such theories play a role in your work?

Michael

Brand activism or socio-political advocacy..., brand activism yes, but for me Viva Con Agua is much more than a brand... ehm, Viva con Agua is an attitude towards life, a philosophy, a social business, a culture, simply more than a brand. Socio-political lobbying or advocacy I understand of course and that is also very important, but we don't work so much in this political advocacy, but we try to change the world positively with civil society universal languages like art, music, culture.

Ricarda
How would you describe your socio-political engagement?

Michael
Yes, again socio-political engagement. We are an NGO, we care about water as a human right. Therefore, we also have a socio-political component and try to be active there, whereby water is a human right, of course. And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, because otherwise we wouldn't do anything else, or we wouldn't do anything else. We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism.

Ricarda
What drives you to stand up for certain issues? And above all, to what extent do you live them within your company?

Michael
Everything we do is social, so all our social businesses are social to the maximum and have the same values, they all originated from the association, so they are all relatively congruent and our businesses are no different than our NGO or foundation. Of course, our foundation has the trademark rights, so there are differences and so on, the Wasser GmbH sells a product, but nevertheless everything is a Viva Con Agua soup, you have the same values, the same basic assumptions, as they say. Ehhm exactly..

Ricarda
How do you decide as an organisation on which events/socio-political issues to take a public stand? Do you have precise criteria? If so, what are they?

Michael
Again, we try to make as few side issues as possible and just try to be active and thereby get involved, but not jumping on all the issues that are out there all the time. We are very clear in our communication: "Clean drinking water, decent sanitation - and hygiene" and even if abortion is an issue in Texas right now, I might play that on the very personal level, on my social media profiles, but not Viva Con Agua, because Viva Con Agua cares about clean drinking water and decent sanitation and I think that's also very important for us because otherwise we would dilute ourselves.

Ricarda
What role do your values and purpose play in this?

Michael
Purpose is the be-all and end-all, there would be nothing without Viva Con Agua. This whole number of Purpose nowadays, in the 21st century... so we started like that, so we've been like that for a very long time..we've always been a Purpose company, so I can't say anything else about it, except that it's always been our theme.

Ricarda
Do you always give your opinion? Are you sometimes pressured to speak out? If so, how do you deal with it?

Michael
No, we don't always give our opinion, that's not what Viva Con Agua is about, but we try to offer joyful engagement to the people.

Ricarda
Who is involved in these decision-making processes and why? Do you follow preconceived plans or how do you structure yourselves?

Michael
This question is not really relevant for us because we just really want to provide access to clean drinking water and also just generate offers, just have a positive impact and it's still important that there are all the others.

Ricarda
What influence does your commitment have on your employees?

Michael
Most of our staff come from voluntary work, i.e. they have been involved in Viva Con Agua at some point and have become staff members at VCA as a result. So from my point of view, it's actually a circle, it's all self-conditioning. Exactly, there would be no voluntary work without the main office and vice versa. I hope that helps a bit as an answer.

Appendix L: Prove of contact with Professor Pimentel

Appendix M: Coding with Atlas.ti and citations

ATLAS.ti-Report
Report erstellt von Ricarda Drewes am 14.11.2021

◈ **Definition statements**
2 Kodes:

○ **Activist**
7 Zitate:
▤ 1:7 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
But to always look at: "What is my role in the system? What is our role in the system? Does it actually make sense to grow at all or can't we do it much better in other forms of activism?"
And in that context, of course, I am, we are as a company, also very activist.
▤ 1:12 ¶ 35 – 38 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
But would you use the term brand activism for Folkdays, for example?

Lisa

Yes, I would see it that way, because we simply do a lot of educational work within the framework that we have. Fair by law was also, so to speak, even if the initial impetus came from me, it was a corporate project, or it still is a corporate project. Totally, so in any case!
⊜ 1:62 ¶ 74 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
So that we are somehow taking on an activist role in relation to it.
⊜ 2:7 ¶ 54 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx
Inhalt:
Yeah, I would say yes, I do see us in this I we are activists in our own way in breaking the status quo.
⊜ 3:3 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx
Inhalt:
One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics.
⊜ 3:10 ¶ 24 in Ooia Transcript English.docx
Inhalt:
But to make it fully believable, you have to, I think Kati and Christine have that, you simply cannot be afraid of addressing very difficult and complex and complicated topics.
⊜ 5:19 ¶ 25 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx
Inhalt:
We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism.

● **Other characteristic definitions**
9 Zitate:
⊜ 1:11 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
But I would definitely say that I am a social entrepreneur, but, if the term meant something to more people, I would probably call myself more of a systempreneur.
⊜ 1:22 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
And of course we also have the great advantage that sales and purpose are very closely linked.
⊜ 1:76 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
"systempreneur",
⊜ 1:77 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
But I would definitely say that I am a social entrepreneur, but, if the term meant something to more people, I would probably call myself more of a systempreneur.
⊜ 1:78 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
Well, I think folkdays is one thing, the question is how does folkdays work in the system? In the meantime, I would no longer describe myself primarily as an entrepreneur, but rather as a "systempreneur", which is a topic we also deal with a bit in our book, that it is more about...looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system?
⊜ 3:5 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx
Inhalt:
And the whole thing is basically based on three pillars that Kati and Christine have defined for their company. One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the

company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics. The second pillar is simply the economic profitability, and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work.

⊜ 4:89 ¶ 33 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

brand awareness

⊜ 4:90 ¶ 33 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

political correctness

⊜ 5:19 ¶ 25 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism.

◈ Formulation
11 Kodes:

● Challenging internal status quo
5 Zitate:

⊜ 1:18 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I think it's cool because I think that in the beginning we were all really concerned about that and we were like: Yo, for an internship...We've all done shitty internships in our lives, that's what you do." And all the interns were always super happy here. But I think she's totally right. So I think she's totally right and that it's good that she dares to speak up like this, and to challenge, which is also a super uncomfortable task. And we are already thinking about how to achieve this flexibility that we now have.

⊜ 1:20 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But you should continuously question whether it's actually cool the way we do it.

⊜ 1:50 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Sometimes there is also a situation where I am also challenged in the team and someone says,

⊜ 1:60 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

that has of course led to the fact that we have a kind of culture where we are very, where we are very open and can also exchange ideas well and can also be critical sometimes, because we all like each other so much that we don't have to be afraid that something bad will happen.

⊜ 1:68 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then I started thinking about the "white saviour" complex. And I think it also came from the team, that someone said, I think we have to be really careful, let's rethink this! How do we have to communicate?

● Competence-based hierachy
3 Zitate:

⊜ 1:57 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

direction of a competence-based hierarchy. That means that not everyone always has a say in every little decision, but that actually everyone always knows who is well informed in which topics

⊜ 1:59 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I'm not the smartest one here in the team, we're all smart in our different ways.

⊜ 3:60 ¶ 72 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

but I would say that also happens in a non-hierarchical way, very easy and quick. But there are no complex structures or anything like that defined yet.

● **Evaluating possible reactions**

7 Zitate:

⊜ 1:42 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So we just say okay, we can't please everybody.

⊜ 1:63 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then one of the team members said, "That's cool, but only that we are aware of it. It's possible that people will come and hate us for inviting her."

⊜ 3:42 ¶ 96 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Sometimes you are already a bit internally prepared for those comments. But genrally speaking we are still in a very cool place I think. So with us, criticism is often explained that way or relatively factual or something.

⊜ 4:28 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Because we've talked everything through, and there's no catch to it, we're not getting ourselves into the jam with it.

⊜ 4:40 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So when we prepare a single social media post, which is just a post, we naturally go through it roughly in our heads, could something happen? What could the reactions be like? But then it's not the case that we write down an answer beforehand, and when the question comes, we have the answer ready. We rather do that if the situation comes.

⊜ 4:67 ¶ 135 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We always say that even negative press is press and the more press, the better.

⊜ 4:92 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

"Okay, this and that will be coming soon, there will probably be several posts about it, there's a whole bottle for it in the shop or the posters are hanging in the cities", then we prepare ourselves more, then we prepare an FAQ. We think about what possible questions will come up or what possible insinuations will be made, and then we come up with a rough answer that fits that.

● **Guided by purpose and values**

40 Zitate:

⊜ 1:3 ¶ 20 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the purpose of Folkdays is...well, by now I would probably say two purposes, but they are probably directly related. One is, to establish value chains, or simply a way of doing business that benefits everyone. Both people who work for us here and people who work for us in our supply chains, as well as me as a founder. So, by that I don't necessarily mean just

monetarily, but also as people, so to speak, finding fulfilment and of course also benefiting monetarily, but that it is simply a way of doing business everyone is benefitting from.

⊜ 1:4 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

to create a workplace where the people who come here feel comfortable, are able to be their selves and hopefully also develop on a personal level.

⊜ 1:5 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Back then, we were very much focused on our clients and our producers in terms of benefiting from what we do. But at the end of the day, I believe that it can only be sustainable, so you can only be seriously sustainable as a company if you also manage to create a workplace that meets the same requirements as what you actually want to do along the value chain.

⊜ 1:14 ¶ 44 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then we realised that maybe there are other ways to change the status quo and that's how I think it came about. So it was more like: "Ah, why is nobody talking about this topic? It's totally crazy. And it's actually a good solution to many problems. Why? How can we make it a bit more public and maybe a bit sexier? And then we simply used the skills we had as Folkdays to bring a topic that is very unwieldy at first, namely supply chain law, closer to the general public.

⊜ 1:15 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But I do believe that we have a culture here where everyone is allowed to ask everything, and say everything, and question everything, and does so.

⊜ 1:21 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

hmm the moment we don't have a purpose anymore, we would stop doing it.

⊜ 1:26 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I don't have the feeling that this has ever really been in conflict. So maybe a situation in which we have to decide to sell via Amazon or not. Where we then decide quite clearly against it. But that's exactly the kind of thing that could be a decision.

⊜ 1:47 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And even if I had known that we would lose followers, I would have done it anyway, because she is so smart and I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart.

⊜ 1:64 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart. So it doesn't matter what skin colour, what religion and what background they have, of course!

⊜ 1:78 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Well, I think folkdays is one thing, the question is how does folkdays work in the system? In the meantime, I would no longer describe myself primarily as an entrepreneur, but rather as a "systempreneur", which is a topic we also deal with a bit in our book, that it is more about...looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system?

⊜ 2:3 ¶ 36 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

the purpose of GoSpring is to give men serenity to overcome their health challenges with ease. And the values will be to be discreet, to be approachable, to solve problems, and to actually enable others to not feel excluded.

⊜ 2:8 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So what drives us to certain topics is that everyone actually deserves to love. And everyone deserves to actually have a fulfilled sex life, regardless how, regardless with whom, and having something like erectile dysfunction, which so many men have, it is something which makes us which cranks us up, and which says: "Oh, we really need to do something about it!"

⊜ 2:20 ¶ 90 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

It has to be aligned with our purpose and with our values. So, we will not go to a rock concert where there's only music, I mean, it would be actually meaningless. So, there has to be a meaning behind it. And it has to be aligned with what we stand for. And what we want to reach.

⊜ 2:21 ¶ 96 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So we do not put any statements about politics or about what's happening in the world? Because we don't believe that it is our place to say something about war, or to say something about abortion rules in the USA. So no, we do stand out. We do state our opinion when it has to do with us and with what we often will with what we stand for, but that's it.

⊜ 3:6 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And these are basically three pillars that must never be neglected in the decision-making process.

⊜ 3:7 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Well, because we could of course easily say we are now expanding into the USA, but that would, for example, certainly contribute to social change and economic efficiency, but currently simply contradicts with the family-friendly, because they would have to travel far too much, or we would all have to travel way too much or something.

⊜ 3:8 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

You could also say we start producing, I don't know, a great shoe or whatever, but does the world need another shoe? It probably would somehow bring good money, but does it also represent social change? So the things we do have to somehow meet these three factors.

⊜ 3:21 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I believe the topic of acceptance is pretty important, too. Everyone can come as they want, can wear what they want. I think that's something very obvious for us anyway.

⊜ 3:22 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So there are certain values that guide us how we work and how we treat each other. I would say that it is lived (implemented) very well.

⊜ 3:25 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Because, you always have to evaluate if it's about jumping on a bandwagon or what are the issues that you stand for?

⊜ 3:26 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something.

⊜ 3:32 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

There are things where we just know very clearly, okay, that matches us one hundred percent, but of course there are also things where you have the feeling that you would jump on a bandwagon, and we normally do not actively engage in. I think it's a discovery phase, but I would say there is almost no limit in the stories.

⊜ 3:36 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Look, even as a company, you can't deal with all topics.

⊜ 3:53 ¶ 120 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

It definitely has an impact on which products we launch, for example. Well, we could, we have now built a brand, and of course we could now just do a thousand things that make good money, for example. Well, we could just sell something else under the brand name Ooia. But the aim is that all products somehow solve a problem, that they are problem solvers. And at that moment, it already has an impact on company decisions.

⊜ 3:55 ¶ 162 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So, if you want to stand for more with your company than just your product, then it has to be really, very deeply anchored in your DNA, otherwise you lose more with it than you do well, then you better leave it.

⊜ 3:65 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics. The second pillar is simply the economic profitability, and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work.

⊜ 4:1 ¶ 21 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

"truefruits, no tricks." We always say we don't take ourselves too seriously, but we take our product all the more seriously for that.

⊜ 4:2 ¶ 21 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

That means we put so much time into the development of a product until it really tastes one hundred percent perfect and we find the best mango among all 5000 mango varieties. And we don't take ourselves too seriously when it comes to communication. So "truefruits, no tricks" is what I would say are the values we represent here 100 percent.

⊜ 4:3 ¶ 27 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So here (at truefruits) it's really the case that everyone can freely express their opinion and everyone can freely express their values. And that everything is actually in line with the values of the employees here, because that's what makes us special and, above all, because a lot of personality flows in here and it's not a predetermined line that has to be followed, but the opinion, no matter which employee it is, whether it's a trainee, an intern or a senior position, every opinion is equal and every personal value also counts here.

⊜ 4:11 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Even if we think now, for example, the federal election is coming up soon, probably a lot of companies will do something on the federal election...but we would now say "okay, that's definitely a topic we could gain attention with, or as other companies would probably say, we can perform well with that", but we say "we absolutely don't feel like doing anything on that. We don't want to comment." Because our main goal is not to perform well, our main goal is to stay true to our line. Then we don't do anything about that.

⊜ 4:13 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

if someone speaks out very strongly against a topic and says: "Hey, guys, if we do this, then I have a very strong stomach ache", or "I can't reconcile this with myself", then we don't do it! So if the team doesn't feel comfortable with it, cause they are also the ones who have to pay for it if something goes wrong, let it be with communication, in community management, e-mails or other channels, then it won't be implemented.

⊜ 4:55 ¶ 111 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

There are no hierarchies here.

⊜ 4:58 ¶ 111 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

I think that's the most important thing, that we try to give everyone a platform and include them,

⊜ 4:62 ¶ 123 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But we were honest and we gave an honest answer. I think the most important thing is that we can just always go to bed at night with a clear conscience. We stayed true to ourselves and we didn't prostitute ourselves for anyone in order to get something in return.

⊜ 4:79 ¶ 158 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But we don't want the perfect family product, we want a product for everyone. And we are perhaps personally a bit more communicative, more provocative. Or we're not at a loss for words, we say what we think.

⊜ 4:87 ¶ 105 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But the main thing for us is just to have fun.

⊜ 5:1 ¶ 13 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

we are allowed to work very freely and we believe that we can change the world in a positive, joyful and loving way and that is our core. That we always stay positive and always try to transform, to always change the world positively.

⊜ 5:5 ¶ 19 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

brand activism yes, but for me Viva Con Agua is much more than a brand... ehm, Viva con Agua is an attitude towards life, a philosophy, a social business, a culture, simply more than a brand.

⊜ 5:10 ¶ 40 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Again, we try to make as few side issues as possible and just try to be active and thereby get involved, but not jumping on all the issues that are out there all the time.

⊜ 5:11 ¶ 40 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

We are very clear in our communication: "Clean drinking water, decent sanitation - and hygiene" and even if abortion is an issue in Texas right now, I might play that on the very

personal level, on my social media profiles, but not Viva Con Agua, because Viva Con Agua cares about clean drinking water and decent sanitation and I think that's also very important for us because otherwise we would dilute ourselves.

● **Including Management**
5 Zitate:
◉ 1:31 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
Maybe I also see my role in it a little bit... to support it, so we have situations from time to time where a staff member who is more socialised in a slightly different system says to me: "Hey Lisa, in the end you have to decide, you're the boss"
◉ 3:67 ¶ 72 in Ooia Transcript English.docx
Inhalt:
We either write a mobile message, for example, or Kati and Christine decide directly. They are actually very, very involved, which is a bit unusual, because many Instagram accounts are operated by a social media team or the customer service team or something.
◉ 4:16 ¶ 63 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx
Inhalt:
And then every idea that is bigger or that somehow moves in a socio-political... direction is discussed again with the management. Because that is also a very important part for us. Inga, Mark and Nick, our three founders, who have of course been with us since the beginning and are still very much involved, which of course makes a difference. Because they are still involved in everything and put their heart and soul into it but of course leave us our freedom, but still always support us. And especially with such difficult decisions, which we perhaps cannot simply make as employees, "do we really say anything about it now? Yes, because we often know that if we do something about it, there will follow shitstorm. We will definitely have people who will hate us and we know that if we have the founders' go, then it's okay if the shitstorm follows. Then we know, "Okay, our three founders have also agreed and they're kind of fine with that too."
◉ 4:88 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx
Inhalt:
Then we have our marketing director, that's the dear Fee. She has the upper hand with us, she is also our communications manager.
◉ 4:91 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx
Inhalt:
We think about it in small groups of five, I'd say, then the graphic designer gets right down to it, drops everything and writes the post. And then, before we present it to the management, we always have a complete concept.

● **Investing time and other resources**
6 Zitate:
◉ 1:80 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx
Inhalt:
that we put an incredible amount of energy into it. But it's not.
◉ 3:11 ¶ 24 in Ooia Transcript English.docx
Inhalt:
Because they (the two founders) really go deep, discuss very profound topics, invest a lot of time and energy and simply because it comes from heart, because it is so important to them.
◉ 3:61 ¶ 30 in Ooia Transcript English.docx
Inhalt:

So, I think that if you look at it from a KPI point of view only, you would probably say, boor, I put too much time into it.

◉ 3:63 ¶ 96 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Also, you need to decide if you want to spend your time with that in the end of the day and with whom to deal with, and with whom to discuss and with whom not.

◉ 3:64 ¶ 138 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So, it's simply a company decision to say, we also invest time in it because articles have to be well researched and well prepared. And just writing a post here and there, that doesn't work, because then you shoot yourself in the knee, then you'd better just leave it. As a company, you have to decide to say, I provide time or time resources or my people somehow get this and that on hand to do such things well.

◉ 5:16 ¶ 25 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, because otherwise we wouldn't do anything else, or we wouldn't do anything else

● **No theretical concepts / criteria**

15 Zitate:

◉ 1:33 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So, yes, what we have in terms of structure is a feedback process,

◉ 1:56 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

No, we don't have any criteria. I would say that we always do it very discursively here.

◉ 2:1 ¶ 18 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So offering solutions for customers that really struggle in their day to day life, making their life more simple.

◉ 2:5 ¶ 48 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, I didn't know the terms until you told me about them that those terms actually exist.

◉ 3:9 ¶ 24 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I think that as a corporate strategy you can easily be able to present yourself a little artificial (meaning unauthentic), but it has to come very, very deeply from you so that you can implement it really well.

◉ 3:13 ¶ 30 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

because it is not that one said that is now a theory, or that is a term and we try that, maybe it will work for Ooia, so to speak. But it all started with the thought and with the inner need from the beginning onwards.

◉ 3:66 ¶ 30 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So I don't think that these are topics that we somehow read up to in theory and then apply, but there is such a strong DNA within Ooia that it is actually clear.

◉ 4:4 ¶ 33 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't really have such concepts here, we just orientate ourselves according to them, so it rings a bell, but rather from my student days and not from my working days, so to speak. But I think brand awareness and…what also comes up all the time, also in the professional world, is political correctness, at every corner, which is hotter than ever before.

⊜ 4:44 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So it's not a well thought-out plan that we usually have.

⊜ 4:80 ¶ 164 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And then they thought, okay, how do we fill the space on the bottle? There's a lot of space on it. What else can we use the space for? Yeah, then let's make the product even cooler and we'll still write cool stuff on it, because Nick, one of the founders, is a super good lyricist who has always cracked funny lines anyway. Let's use the space on the bottle so that you don't throw it away again straight away, but keep it and also have a bit of a chat while you drink the smoothie.

⊜ 4:84 ¶ 182 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

I think one thing that keeps us alive here or that keeps us from getting bored here, which is probably very, very different from many other companies, is that we never work according to any plans.

⊜ 4:85 ¶ 182 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't have annual plans, we don't have half-year plans, we don't know at the beginning of the year how many Limited we have to launch so that we grow in comparison to last year or something. Most of the time we don't know more than a month before.

⊜ 4:86 ¶ 182 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So a lot of things really happen out of impulse, and I can say that very clearly because I do the project management. I don't have a ready-made plan. And we are also very quick in the decision-making process. And we don't set ourselves any goals. Yes, we don't really have any goals. And that's why we can all work very easily and well, because we don't have any pressure. We absolutely have to do something now, even if we don't think it's so good, but that's the goal of the year or something. Yes, well, I also find that very exciting. That we work in a very agile way, more like real time marketing. Although we don't really like to use such terms, but we react very spontaneously.

⊜ 5:7 ¶ 19 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Brand activism or socio-political advocacy..., brand activism yes, but for me Viva Con Agua is much more than a brand... ehm, Viva con Agua is an attitude towards life, a philosophy, a social business, a culture, simply more than a brand. Socio-political lobbying or advocacy I understand of course and that is also very important, but we don't work so much in this political advocacy, but we try to change the world positively with civil society universal languages like art, music, culture.

⊜ 5:12 ¶ 46 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Purpose is the be-all and end-all, there would be nothing without Viva Con Agua. This whole number of Purpose nowadays, in the 21st century... so we started like that, so we've been like that for a very long time..we've always been a Purpose company, so I can't say anything else about it, except that it's always been our theme.

● **Only inhouse communication**

4 Zitate:

⊜ 1:35 ¶ 68 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

we simply decide: "Okay, are we behind it or not?" And that is actually clarified relatively quickly.

⊜ 3:46 ¶ 96 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

We can actually solve such things spontaneously very well. I think when you are in a corporation, the world looks very different, because there are very often loops, a hundred of loops. People have to approve this, approve that, approve everything before you have a good answer ready for social media. That would take far too long and I think they will have to prepare themselves completely differently for such circumstances.

⊜ 4:12 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

why we are not working with agencies! Because nobody knows truefruits as well as we do! We are truefruits. We are truefruits' communication. We shape that too.

⊜ 4:50 ¶ 105 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Then it's also often political issues. So it's really the case that when we manage an external campaign like this, we create it completely internally, i.e. really ourselves and not with some agency. That's what's really good for us, because no knowledge is getting lost, because in order to be able to speak skilfully on a topic, you first have to be an expert in the field yourself.

● **Open discussions**

18 Zitate:

⊜ 1:15 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But I do believe that we have a culture here where everyone is allowed to ask everything, and say everything, and question everything, and does so.

⊜ 1:27 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

That's something that we discussed openly and then thought: "Do we want that? And now we've said we'll try it out and if it's worth it, then we'll continue with it.

⊜ 1:29 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But these are also things that we simply discuss openly in the team.

⊜ 1:30 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

but everyone gives their opinion on all important decisions. That definitely.

⊜ 1:32 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I'm firmly convinced that we come to better decisions when we make the decision together.

⊜ 1:35 ¶ 68 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

we simply decide: "Okay, are we behind it or not?" And that is actually clarified relatively quickly.

⊜ 1:39 ¶ 80 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I would probably propose it and post it into our social media group. And then everyone would probably say "yeah, let's do it" and then we would do it. Or just say: "Boor no, I think

it's too hot, the situation is somehow too messy, I have a bad feeling about it...let's maybe wait a little bit on how it evolves." So, then it would just happen like this.

⊜ 1:44 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the last time we had a short discussion was when I said I would love to have a conversation with Kübra Gümüca, who has written a book and is wearing a headscarf.

⊜ 1:58 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I don't want to decide that by myself. I would only do it if we all stand behind it. And I don't want to co-work like that. I don't want to make a decision that you actually think is stupid. That's not how I want to work."

⊜ 1:61 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

In the meantime, we have actually reached a point in large parts of our team where I think we have a very good level of communication.

⊜ 1:74 ¶ 44 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

How can we make it a bit more public and maybe a bit sexier?

⊜ 2:26 ¶ 114 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

everyone has the right for their own opinion. So, even if we get bad reviews, or bad comments on social media, or wherever we leave them, because everyone has the right to express what they think.

⊜ 2:38 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

And it was already like a discussion back and forth. And everyone had their own thoughts. So what we did is we put up memes. So, everyone was allowed to choose a meme who wasn't really comfortable with it, and put it in the bathroom in a joking way.

⊜ 4:15 ¶ 63 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And of course we always have brainstorming sessions where we ask: "OK, what else can we do now? We need new limited editions, or what theme do we express ourselves on?", and then we usually come up with a rough idea that we then work out.

⊜ 4:23 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And then we sit down with her and there are usually five or six of us. That also happens in our office...we have an open space office. Then we all just slide together with the chairs.

⊜ 4:24 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

When we really feel, I would say we sometimes have a feeling, that a topic is coming up, then we drop everything else and say: "Okay, we'll sit down together now". And then we discuss the topic first. Then we usually sit there for an hour or an hour and a half and think: "Okay, from what point of view are we looking at the whole thing now and what do we want to achieve with it anyway? What is our message behind it?" Because for us, the whole thing always has to be well thought through. It can't just be good wording, which might be funny, but which might not work on a second level, but it has to be aligned.

⊜ 4:36 ¶ 87 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And in practice it's usually the case that we're sitting at the computer and suddenly someone says, hey, have you heard that topic XY? It is going through the roof! And then he says, okay, we have to do something about it. Okay, let's think about it! Then we just slide together with

our chairs and think about it in marketing. And if, of course, someone else is doing something else at the moment, then he just goes away. But because everything is so open with us and we really do think things over in the heat of the moment, the other departments naturally notice too.

▤ 4:37 ¶ 87 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

It's like a kitchen call here, that we communicate everything openly.

● **Putting themselves into perspective**

13 Zitate:

▤ 1:6 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system? And not to say "okay, now I'm an entrepreneur, now it's just about making Folkdays as big as possible".

▤ 1:7 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But to always look at: "What is my role in the system? What is our role in the system? Does it actually make sense to grow at all or can't we do it much better in other forms of activism?" And in that context, of course, I am, we are as a company, also very activist.

▤ 1:10 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I think that as a human being, I always tend to move on a systemic level and always ask: "Okay, what role do we play? What's the best, what's the smartest?" So, I also often try to approach it very unpretentiously and say: "What is best for the impact and not what is the coolest or most exciting for me as a founder, although that often goes hand in hand."

▤ 1:20 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But you should continuously question whether it's actually cool the way we do it.

▤ 1:28 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then it could happen that in one or two months we say we won't do it anymore. Because the disadvantages are greater than the advantages.

▤ 1:42 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So we just say okay, we can't please everybody.

▤ 1:55 ¶ 122 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

we always ask ourselves the question: "Does this make sense? Does this make sense for the impact? And does that make sense for us, and what kind of world we want to live in, and how does that fit together?"

▤ 2:16 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So we were wondering, perhaps, does this problem occur less with homosexuals or not? We were open to it. So then the idea popped up. Okay, perhaps we are very strong present in the channels were only heterosexual more heterosexual men are in.

▤ 3:57 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

"Okay, this is a topic that I want to and can deal with, or is it really?"

▤ 4:10 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Then you always say "okay, do we think this is good enough that we would send it to our friends? Would you share with your best friends? Do you think this is funny enough or interesting or important that you would share the post and say hey look, we as truefruits just did something totally awesome, you have to check it out." And if that's not the case, if we don't get off on it, then we don't do it.

☰ 4:27 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And in the end, however, the decision is being made by thinking: "What would we do as a private person now?" We think the action is right, we think the action is good. It doesn't matter if someone thinks we're greenwashing and posting this just to jump on the bandwagon. If we personally would post it and say okay, I think it's good, then we'll do it as truefruits too, no matter what kind of reactions will come."

☰ 4:53 ¶ 105 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And we never want to lose the fun of it. And that's how it is when we think about any Limited or so. If we don't have fun with any subject, then it's not a good one. We know that if we don't have fun with it, then we don't put love into it, then we don't put enthusiasm into it. Then we know that it won't be a round thing. And if it's not a round thing, then we don't publish it.

☰ 4:68 ¶ 135 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't want to be "everybody's darling".

● **Specific department**

4 Zitate:

☰ 4:19 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Well, mostly all the communicative decisions are made in our marketing department.

☰ 4:20 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

That means that when such topics come up that we then comment on, in terms of communication. Then we actually only do it in Marketing. Unless it's something totally critical.

☰ 4:22 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

the impulse usually comes from someone in marketing who has taken up the issue somewhere, regardless if he/she is in the management or our trainee.

☰ 4:41 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We have our community management, the staff who writes the comments, even in normal situations just by themselves.

≪ **Four brand activism criteria**

8 Kodes:

○ **Activist**

7 Zitate:

☰ 1:7 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But to always look at: "What is my role in the system? What is our role in the system? Does it actually make sense to grow at all or can't we do it much better in other forms of activism?" And in that context, of course, I am, we are as a company, also very activist.

⊜ 1:12 ¶ 35 – 38 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But would you use the term brand activism for Folkdays, for example?

Lisa
Yes, I would see it that way, because we simply do a lot of educational work within the framework that we have. Fair by law was also, so to speak, even if the initial impetus came from me, it was a corporate project, or it still is a corporate project. Totally, so in any case!

⊜ 1:62 ¶ 74 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So that we are somehow taking on an activist role in relation to it.

⊜ 2:7 ¶ 54 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Yeah, I would say yes, I do see us in this I we are activists in our own way in breaking the status quo.

⊜ 3:3 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics.

⊜ 3:10 ¶ 24 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But to make it fully believable, you have to, I think Kati and Christine have that, you simply cannot be afraid of addressing very difficult and complex and complicated topics.

⊜ 5:19 ¶ 25 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism.

○ Authentic activism

13 Zitate:

⊜ 1:47 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And even if I had known that we would lose followers, I would have done it anyway, because she is so smart and I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart.

⊜ 1:53 ¶ 116 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I don't know to what extent our producers will notice that we have fought for a supply chain law and so on.

⊜ 1:68 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then I started thinking about the "white saviour" complex. And I think it also came from the team, that someone said, I think we have to be really careful, let's rethink this! How do we have to communicate?

⊜ 1:71 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

That is to say, I think that with the CI we also stated that we want to work not only externally but also internally with a certain image of humanity.

⊜ 1:73 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

except that we put an incredible amount of energy into it.

⊜ 2:22 ¶ 102 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Like, for example, the Christopher Street Day. So, we are we are invested in this and we live by this even our company, so everyone, regardless of your sexuality is part of it.

⊜ 3:11 ¶ 24 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Because they (the two founders) really go deep, discuss very profound topics, invest a lot of time and energy and simply because it comes from heart, because it is so important to them.

⊜ 3:16 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

I believe that we take a lot of things for granted that are not at all taken for granted elsewhere.

⊜ 3:18 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

What feels very natural for us, does not feel the natural for everyone I think. And as I have already mentioned, we can work anywhere and anytime.

⊜ 3:21 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I believe the topic of acceptance is pretty important, too. Everyone can come as they want, can wear what they want. I think that's something very obvious for us anyway.

⊜ 3:23 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And everything else we talk about comes very naturally, which we might communicate to the outside world as well, but where we don't talk about every day.

⊜ 3:55 ¶ 162 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So, if you want to stand for more with your company than just your product, then it has to be really, very deeply anchored in your DNA, otherwise you lose more with it than you do well, then you better leave it.

⊜ 3:56 ¶ 162 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Then no one will buy your products anymore. For that, I think, this whole generation that is coming now is too sensitised to what is fake and what is meant seriously and so on.

○ Born with purpose

7 Zitate:

⊜ 1:1 ¶ 14 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Under the guise of "doing good" and, I think, with Folkdays, I was looking for a way of how to run a business on a equal level playing field. And absurdly enough, although this is of course counterintuitive in the capitalist system, business is much more at eye level than charity, and accordingly that was our focus from the beginning.

⊜ 1:70 ¶ 14 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And absurdly enough, although this is of course counterintuitive in the capitalist system, business is much more at eye level than charity, and accordingly that was our focus from the beginning.

⊜ 3:11 ¶ 24 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Because they (the two founders) really go deep, discuss very profound topics, invest a lot of time and energy and simply because it comes from heart, because it is so important to them.

⊜ 4:78 ¶ 158 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

This has definitely been the case since the beginning and has been communicated in exactly the same way for 16 years now. Which means that our brand was exactly the same 16 years ago, I would say, in the way it is communicated now.

◉ 5:2 ¶ 7 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

we are also a social business, or several social businesses and foundations, represented in eight countries worldwide, working for access to clean drinking water. There are still 569 million people without access to clean drinking water and 4.2 billion without access to decent sanitation and supplies. We are working for access to clean drinking water and that is why we are working on the ground and why we founded it ourselves.

◉ 5:12 ¶ 46 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Purpose is the be-all and end-all, there would be nothing without Viva Con Agua. This whole number of Purpose nowadays, in the 21st century... so we started like that, so we've been like that for a very long time..we've always been a Purpose company, so I can't say anything else about it, except that it's always been our theme.

◉ 5:18 ¶ 46 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

we started like that, so we've been like that for a very long time..we've always been a Purpose company, so I can't say anything else about it, except that it's always been our theme.

○ Controversy, contested, sensitive, or polarizing

9 Zitate:

◉ 1:79 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the last time we had a short discussion was when I said I would love to have a conversation with Kübra Gümüca, who has written a book and is wearing a headscarf. And then one of the team members said, "That's cool, but only that we are aware of it. It's possible that people will come and hate us for inviting her."

◉ 2:6 ¶ 48 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

And I would say that with GoSpring, we are for sure trying to break the norm, trying to make it okay to have an erectile dysfunction or to have a premature ejaculation. So, we are standing up for those people, we are trying to break the taboo and trying to break the shame topic, the shame point around this

◉ 2:34 ¶ 162 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We're provocative, so we're really not scared to actually put ourselves out there and use provocative words.

◉ 3:34 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

I believe that as soon as you stick a big toe into one area, that you are somehow engaged with, then you are committed and there is no way to stop. Then, it means immediately, but why? So, imagine you are committed to one cause, e.g. to feminism, then don't let yourself seen with a take-away coffee mug ever again.

◉ 3:68 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something.

◉ 4:68 ¶ 135 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't want to be "everybody's darling".

⊜ 4:94 ¶ 158 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And we are perhaps personally a bit more communicative, more provocative. Or we're not at a loss for words, we say what we think.

⊜ 4:95 ¶ 99 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Then it's more like, we try not to offer a platform to those people who deliberately stir up and provoke a topic. In other words, we usually don't jump on what they throw at us. Because we know very well that the goal is for us to respond, so that they can escalate even more and that we can't get out of the situation, so that a discussion ensues that never ends.

⊜ 5:20 ¶ 25 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Therefore, we also have a socio-political component and try to be active there, whereby water is a human right, of course. And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, because otherwise we wouldn't do anything else, or we wouldn't do anything else. We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism.

● **Implementation internally and/or externally**
51 Zitate:

⊜ 1:4 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

to create a workplace where the people who come here feel comfortable, are able to be their selves and hopefully also develop on a personal level.

⊜ 1:5 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Back then, we were very much focused on our clients and our producers in terms of benefiting from what we do. But at the end of the day, I believe that it can only be sustainable, so you can only be seriously sustainable as a company if you also manage to create a workplace that meets the same requirements as what you actually want to do along the value chain.

⊜ 1:8 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I mean, we have, or I have, but also with Folkdays, and also of course with a lot of support from the team, we have started this campaign "fair by law". In the end, we wanted to push the government to pass a supply chain law three years ago. That is activist.

⊜ 1:16 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

"You know what, one thing I find totally amazing is how independently everyone is working with you and there's no pressure at all. And it's not like: "Do it this way and that way! And it's so full of fun...also flexible, everyone can come and go when they want. No one would ever control working hours and times, or who takes how many vacation days and when."

⊜ 1:19 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

"Okay, we don't want the interns to always be the last ones sitting here.

⊜ 1:23 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Because if we sell more, so to speak, we can buy more products and thus also have more economic development in the regions.

⊜ 1:24 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And at the same time, of course, it's clear that we still have to pay the people here so well that they don't work here in an exploitative way, just so that we can buy more products from the local people.

⊜ 1:41 ¶ 98 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I would say mainly social media and of course interviews and so on, right? So classic press.

⊜ 1:43 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I do an Instagram Live format where I talk to different port leaders about different topics that go beyond Folkdays.

⊜ 1:44 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the last time we had a short discussion was when I said I would love to have a conversation with Kübra Gümüca, who has written a book and is wearing a headscarf.

⊜ 1:51 ¶ 110 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I think the commitment is the employees! Well, you can't separate them from each other. So it comes from each other and from the people who are here together. And I think everyone here in the team is quite political, activist and also interested and open.

⊜ 1:75 ¶ 44 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then we simply used the skills we had as Folkdays to bring a topic that is very unwieldy at first, namely supply chain law, closer to the general public.

⊜ 2:2 ¶ 30 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So as so many men starting the age of 50, every third man actually suffers from erectile dysfunction or premature ejaculation. It is a problem which is really widely spread. Men really struggled to go to see a urologist because it is embarrassing, because it is a shame topic. And it's even worse for them to go to the pharmacy and to be facing a woman who's standing behind the counter to buy their Viagra or Cialis and so on.

⊜ 2:4 ¶ 36 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

struggle with something like an erection really makes them feel like they are not part of the community, like they are excluded from the people around them, that they're different, that they're disconnected. So with GoSpring, we actually want to make those men feel like it is okay to be different. And that there are solutions to it.

⊜ 2:10 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

I would say that in the company generally there are no taboos. So people talk about everything. And freedom of speech. And freedom of opinion, is very big here. So you are not judged or criticized for speaking out something which is usually something you don't do.

⊜ 2:11 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

we have a unisex bathroom here

⊜ 2:12 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

And it was already like a discussion back and forth. And everyone had their own thoughts. So what we did is we put up memes. So, everyone was allowed to choose a meme who wasn't really comfortable with it, and put it in the bathroom in a joking way. So to break the norm of having this: "Now I just peed and there was another male colleague with me now in the

bathroom, I don't feel comfortable." We put like: "hey, when you are in the urinal, close your door, no one wants to see your (?) behind..." or stuff like that, you know, with humour, but just speaking out the things we usually don't want to speak out. So, same with ED, with erectile dysfunctions. Men don't want to talk about it, but just putting a bit of a smirk to it.

2:13 ¶ 72 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Yes, and now all the bathroom stalls have, like, for example, female products, like tampons, and so on. Just to break it to be like: "Ah, okay, even in the men's store, there is something because sometimes it's full. So you end up going to the men's so which is no problem, but just to ease it a bit.

2:14 ¶ 66 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, one of my colleagues was like, hey, but why don't we just put like, messages to lighten up the mood in the bathroom, so it's not so awkward and uncomfortable and shameful? Because it's not shameful. We are all humam beings, we all need to go to the bathroom. There's no human being who doesn't have to.

2:17 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So which is why we decided to go to the Christopher Street Day in Cologne, and we had a truck and we tried to make it funny. And because we put on as a big sign on our truck reports: "Let's make erections great again!" And on the other side, we had the writing of: "Everyone deserves love equality and erections!" So the Christopher Street Day is a demonstration for the rights and equality of homosexual people in Germany, which is why we wanted to support that, but we still wanted to add a message here and say: "Hey, you all deserve love. You all deserve equality, but you all deserve erections as well, because this is another taboo which needs to be broken."

2:18 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We had stickers which said: "you are beautiful", "you are hot", "you are a sex god in your own way".

2:19 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

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So, we gave voice to the gay men of this parade. Since they were actually demonstrating for the Equal Rights, it was a kind of way for them to demonstrate for them to actually have the right to have an erection as well. So, yeah, that's only the...

2:22 ¶ 102 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Like, for example, the Christopher Street Day. So, we are we are invested in this and we live by this even our company, so everyone, regardless of your sexuality is part of it.

2:24 ¶ 108 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, we go offline, we have out of home campaigns as well. We had our out of home campaign in Berlin, we use the actually the Berlin tower, and we did put a cricket. And we wrote: "Geh' steif!". So translated it would mean: "go hard."

2:25 ¶ 108 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, Instagram, and Facebook, not so much, actually, because it's very difficult. You get blocked very fast all the time. And of course, via email to our sending customers.

2:26 ¶ 114 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

everyone has the right for their own opinion. So, even if we get bad reviews, or bad comments on social media, or wherever we leave them, because everyone has the right to express what they think.

⊜ 2:34 ¶ 162 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We're provocative, so we're really not scared to actually put ourselves out there and use provocative words.

⊜ 2:37 ¶ 132 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, even by being there at that demonstration, we're still not just demonstrating for the others, but we're also demonstrating for our friends at the company as well.

⊜ 3:1 ¶ 12 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And also this whole topic of working independently of time and place, which was what made me give some thought as a young mom.

⊜ 3:4 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work.

⊜ 3:11 ¶ 24 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Because they (the two founders) really go deep, discuss very profound topics, invest a lot of time and energy and simply because it comes from heart, because it is so important to them.

⊜ 3:17 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Hmm, so for example we talked about it before, it was about working independently of time and place, and we were writing some content on that topic giving tips about it.

⊜ 3:18 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

What feels very natural for us, does not feel the natural for everyone I think. And as I have already mentioned, we can work anywhere and anytime.

⊜ 3:19 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I believe that this is actually something that both employers and employees have to learn: to trust each other and to be able to make use out of that trust. So, for me it is really comfortable because, for example, I can easily pick up my daughter from school in the afternoon without feeling guilty.

⊜ 3:20 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But be also talk a lot about specific topics. We have leadership meetings in which insights are shared and we get educated indeed...

⊜ 3:22 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So there are certain values that guide us how we work and how we treat each other. I would say that it is lived (implemented) very well.

⊜ 3:23 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And everything else we talk about comes very naturally, which we might communicate to the outside world as well, but where we don't talk about every day.

⊜ 3:27 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something. And Christine and Kati cover a lot of different topics in our (Instagram) stories, that's a little bit like…you know, the stories are just a bit more free and independent compared to our other channels.

⊜ 3:28 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But especially in the stories a lot of things are being discussed, there are actually no limits, I would say.

⊜ 3:31 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So where we really get involved as Ooia, it's mostly with topics that just go very well with us. Well, we work together with the CIJ, it's the "Center For Intersectional Justice". A lot of it deals with feministic issues. We also collaborated with "Wash United", it was about period poverty and so on.

⊜ 3:39 ¶ 84 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Facebook runs along a bit. Email marketing is important to us. And of course the website. But we're not on TikTok. We do LinkedIn a little bit, but that's about.

⊜ 3:40 ¶ 90 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

we had a campaign for the "International Women's Day", where we thought, okay, a lot of people just go like this: "Okay, tell us your story, what happened to you? What happened to you unjustly? Or so… Then we thought okay, a hundred other channels do that too. We might think more ahead and then we came up with a campaign, where we recorded common prejudices against women and how you have a quick-witted answer to them.

⊜ 4:3 ¶ 27 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So here (at truefruits) it's really the case that everyone can freely express their opinion and everyone can freely express their values. And that everything is actually in line with the values of the employees here, because that's what makes us special and, above all, because a lot of personality flows in here and it's not a predetermined line that has to be followed, but the opinion, no matter which employee it is, whether it's a trainee, an intern or a senior position, every opinion is equal and every personal value also counts here.

⊜ 4:31 ¶ 81 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Well, social media is actually always the first channel that we take up, especially when it comes to impulse decisions. And our strongest platform is definitely Instagram. Facebook runs alongside it. But we're also doing more and more on Tiktok, but then less about socio-political topics and more about entertaining topics. Twitter used to be, I would say, or is still very politically charged, but it doesn't work so well for us anymore.

⊜ 4:32 ¶ 81 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Another medium we still use, which we also use a lot, is our newsletter. But we only send out our newsletter when we have some important topics and when we have something new. Because we've never had discount codes or sales or anything like that. That means you never have this advantage of getting discount codes from our newsletter, but always just the news value.

⊜ 4:33 ¶ 81 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Yes, what is also an important platform for us is our bottle itself. We write new bottle texts on all our bottles every four weeks. Our bottle texts are our flagship. We have a lot of people

sitting here who do nothing but writing texts all day. Of course, we also use the platform to express ourselves on important topics and not just for gimmicks. Just like our bottle as a limited edition. Of course, that needs a bit more lead time because the bottle has to get printed. But here, too, we sometimes express ourselves on important issues, including political issues and other things.

4:34 ¶ 81 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Another medium in our communication is poster campaigns. We have done a lot of it in the past. Where we have also expressed ourselves politically, I would say, and have strongly revealed our opinion. Of course, this creates different waves than when it's seen on a small bottle or on a social media post, when it hangs boldly in the middle of the city centre. But these are actually the platforms. So social media is always there!

4:52 ¶ 105 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

As simple as it sounds, when we're sitting here in the social media conference and someone has a wording and four people just have to laugh heartily. Then we know okay, pocketed, that's the thing.

5:2 ¶ 7 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

we are also a social business, or several social businesses and foundations, represented in eight countries worldwide, working for access to clean drinking water. There are still 569 million people without access to clean drinking water and 4.2 billion without access to decent sanitation and supplies. We are working for access to clean drinking water and that is why we are working on the ground and why we founded it ourselves.

5:9 ¶ 31 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Everything we do is social, so all our social businesses are social to the maximum and have the same values, they all originated from the association, so they are all relatively congruent and our businesses are no different than our NGO or foundation.

5:20 ¶ 25 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Therefore, we also have a socio-political component and try to be active there, whereby water is a human right, of course. And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, because otherwise we wouldn't do anything else, or we wouldn't do anything else. We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism.

● **Implementation/ Advocacy**

6 Zitate:

2:6 ¶ 48 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

And I would say that with GoSpring, we are for sure trying to break the norm, trying to make it okay to have an erectile dysfunction or to have a premature ejaculation. So, we are standing up for those people, we are trying to break the taboo and trying to break the shame topic, the shame point around this

2:24 ¶ 108 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, we go offline, we have out of home campaigns as well. We had our out of home campaign in Berlin, we use the actually the Berlin tower, and we did put a cricket. And we wrote: "Geh' steif!". So translated it would mean: "go hard."

⊜ 2:34 ¶ 162 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We're provocative, so we're really not scared to actually put ourselves out there and use provocative words.

⊜ 2:35 ¶ 162 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We are all about breaking the norm. So, for example, using wordings which usually don't use, like: "Schlappschwanz" (engl. "Limp-dick"), which is something where people in Germany are like, "oh, okay, that's a vulgar word!", but this is how you get the attention of the people. So, by standing out by taking the things with ease, and yeah..

⊜ 4:9 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

limited edition, which often expresses political statements or something else...

⊜ 4:96 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Because of course, as we always act in all our communication, we always give a lot of thought to all the sentences that get posted or to all the wordings. And we have looked at the whole thing five times. And that's also how it is with critical comments and when we plan a major campaign and know in advance. "Okay, this and that will be coming soon, there will probably be several posts about it, there's a whole bottle for it in the shop or the posters are hanging in the cities",

● **Other characteristic definitions**

9 Zitate:

⊜ 1:11 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But I would definitely say that I am a social entrepreneur, but, if the term meant something to more people, I would probably call myself more of a systempreneur.

⊜ 1:22 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And of course we also have the great advantage that sales and purpose are very closely linked.

⊜ 1:76 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

"systempreneur",

⊜ 1:77 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But I would definitely say that I am a social entrepreneur, but, if the term meant something to more people, I would probably call myself more of a systempreneur.

⊜ 1:78 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Well, I think folkdays is one thing, the question is how does folkdays work in the system? In the meantime, I would no longer describe myself primarily as an entrepreneur, but rather as a "systempreneur", which is a topic we also deal with a bit in our book, that it is more about...looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system?

⊜ 3:5 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And the whole thing is basically based on three pillars that Kati and Christine have defined for their company. One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics. The second pillar is simply the

economic profitability, and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work.

⊜ 4:89 ¶ 33 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

brand awareness

⊜ 4:90 ¶ 33 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

political correctness

⊜ 5:19 ¶ 25 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism.
○ Purpose
10 Zitate:

⊜ 1:3 ¶ 20 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the purpose of Folkdays is...well, by now I would probably say two purposes, but they are probably directly related. One is, to establish value chains, or simply a way of doing business that benefits everyone. Both people who work for us here and people who work for us in our supply chains, as well as me as a founder. So, by that I don't necessarily mean just monetarily, but also as people, so to speak, finding fulfilment and of course also benefiting monetarily, but that it is simply a way of doing business everyone is benefitting from.

⊜ 1:4 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

to create a workplace where the people who come here feel comfortable, are able to be their selves and hopefully also develop on a personal level.

⊜ 2:1 ¶ 18 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So offering solutions for customers that really struggle in their day to day life, making their life more simple.

⊜ 2:3 ¶ 36 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

the purpose of GoSpring is to give men serenity to overcome their health challenges with ease. And the values will be to be discreet, to be approachable, to solve problems, and to actually enable others to not feel excluded.

⊜ 3:2 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

I would say you get products at Ooia that make your everyday life easier, especially women's everyday life, or however you define yourself.

⊜ 3:3 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics.

⊜ 4:87 ¶ 105 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But the main thing for us is just to have fun.

⊜ 4:93 ¶ 21 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So "truefruits, no tricks" is what I would say are the values we represent here 100 percent.

⊜ 5:2 ¶ 7 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

we are also a social business, or several social businesses and foundations, represented in eight countries worldwide, working for access to clean drinking water. There are still 569 million people without access to clean drinking water and 4.2 billion without access to decent sanitation and supplies. We are working for access to clean drinking water and that is why we are working on the ground and why we founded it ourselves.

◉ 5:3 ¶ 13 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

we believe that we can change the world in a positive, joyful and loving way and that is our core.

◈ Implementation

11 Kodes:

● Implementation / demonstrating

3 Zitate:

◉ 2:17 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So which is why we decided to go to the Christopher Street Day in Cologne, and we had a truck and we tried to make it funny. And because we put on as a big sign on our truck reports: "Let's make erections great again!" And on the other side, we had the writing of: "Everyone deserves love equality and erections!" So the Christopher Street Day is a demonstration for the rights and equality of homosexual people in Germany, which is why we wanted to support that, but we still wanted to add a message here and say: "Hey, you all deserve love. You all deserve equality, but you all deserve erections as well, because this is another taboo which needs to be broken."

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So, we gave voice to the gay men of this parade. Since they were actually demonstrating for the Equal Rights, it was a kind of way for them to demonstrate for them to actually have the right to have an erection as well. So, yeah, that's only the...

◉ 2:22 ¶ 102 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Like, for example, the Christopher Street Day. So, we are we are invested in this and we live by this even our company, so everyone, regardless of your sexuality is part of it.

● Implementation / educating

9 Zitate:

◉ 1:36 ¶ 74 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

as an individual, I am already involved in a lot of issues that go further away from Fairtrade and value chains, and the bottom line is that I am also in the process of building up a network of women with Naomi, my co-author, and how we want to somehow reinvent how the economy is thought through, how entrepreneurship is thought through, how financing structures are created and so on.

◉ 1:52 ¶ 116 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I do believe that we make people a bit smarter, I would say that.

◉ 1:65 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Lisa also talks to Kübra, who wears a headscarf, and approaches the subject a little differently, then I think it is something that can impact her getting a different image of women who wear a headscarf.

⊜ 1:75 ¶ 44 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then we simply used the skills we had as Folkdays to bring a topic that is very unwieldy at first, namely supply chain law, closer to the general public.

⊜ 3:27 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something. And Christine and Kati cover a lot of different topics in our (Instagram) stories, that's a little bit like…you know, the stories are just a bit more free and independent compared to our other channels.

⊜ 3:28 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

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But especially in the stories a lot of things are being discussed, there are actually no limits, I would say.

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⊜ 3:40 ¶ 90 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

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we had a campaign for the "International Women's Day", where we thought, okay, a lot of people just go like this: "Okay, tell us your story, what happened to you? What happened to you unjustly? Or so… Then we thought okay, a hundred other channels do that too. We might think more ahead and then we came up with a campaign, where we recorded common prejudices against women and how you have a quick-witted answer to them.

⊜ 5:20 ¶ 25 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Therefore, we also have a socio-political component and try to be active there, whereby water is a human right, of course. And that's why we are very active there, we also have the campaign "water is a human right", but we still try not to get too involved in these socio-political issues, because otherwise we wouldn't do anything else, or we wouldn't do anything else. We just think that would hinder us and that's why we are very focused on joyful activism.

● **Implementation / engaging with community**

3 Zitate:

⊜ 2:4 ¶ 36 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

struggle with something like an erection really makes them feel like they are not part of the community, like they are excluded from the people around them, that they're different, that they're disconnected. So with GoSpring, we actually want to make those men feel like it is okay to be different. And that there are solutions to it.

⊜ 2:18 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We had stickers which said: "you are beautiful", "you are hot", "you are a sex god in your own way".

⊜ 5:13 ¶ 52 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

No, we don't always give our opinion, that's not what Viva Con Agua is about, but we try to offer joyful engagement to the people.

● **Implementation / Founder's voice**

5 Zitate:

⊜ 1:41 ¶ 98 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I would say mainly social media and of course interviews and so on, right? So classic press.

⊜ 1:43 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I do an Instagram Live format where I talk to different port leaders about different topics that go beyond Folkdays.

⊜ 1:44 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the last time we had a short discussion was when I said I would love to have a conversation with Kübra Gümüca, who has written a book and is wearing a headscarf.

⊜ 3:27 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something. And Christine and Kati cover a lot of different topics in our (Instagram) stories, that's a little bit like…you know, the stories are just a bit more free and independent compared to our other channels.

⊜ 3:59 ¶ 72 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

They are actually very, very involved, which is a bit unusual, because many Instagram accounts are operated by a social media team or the customer service team or something. So, our two founders are already very, very involved and can therefore react themselves just in the moment.

● **Implementation / giving a voice**

3 Zitate:

⊜ 1:43 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I do an Instagram Live format where I talk to different port leaders about different topics that go beyond Folkdays.

⊜ 1:66 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Lisa also talks to Kübra, who wears a headscarf, and approaches the subject a little differently

⊜ 2:19 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, we gave voice to the gay men of this parade. Since they were actually demonstrating for the Equal Rights, it was a kind of way for them to demonstrate for them to actually have the right to have an erection as well. So, yeah, that's only the...

● **Implementation / keeping balance**

2 Zitate:

⊜ 1:24 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And at the same time, of course, it's clear that we still have to pay the people here so well that they don't work here in an exploitative way, just so that we can buy more products from the local people.

▤ 3:58 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But in the end, we also sell products, so to speak, so you have to create a bit of a balance. What are our topics and which are not?

● **Implementation / petition**

3 Zitate:

▤ 1:8 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I mean, we have, or I have, but also with Folkdays, and also of course with a lot of support from the team, we have started this campaign "fair by law". In the end, we wanted to push the government to pass a supply chain law three years ago. That is activist.

▤ 1:53 ¶ 116 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I don't know to what extent our producers will notice that we have fought for a supply chain law and so on.

▤ 1:75 ¶ 44 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then we simply used the skills we had as Folkdays to bring a topic that is very unwieldy at first, namely supply chain law, closer to the general public.

● **Implementation / trust**

5 Zitate:

▤ 1:16 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

"You know what, one thing I find totally amazing is how independently everyone is working with you and there's no pressure at all. And it's not like: "Do it this way and that way! And it's so full of fun...also flexible, everyone can come and go when they want. No one would ever control working hours and times, or who takes how many vacation days and when."

▤ 2:10 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

I would say that in the company generally there are no taboos. So people talk about everything. And freedom of speech. And freedom of opinion, is very big here. So you are not judged or criticized for speaking out something which is usually something you don't do.

▤ 2:36 ¶ 132 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So as I said, here, even in the company we do accept and live by everyone has a right and everyone has the same rights, and it's all equal.

▤ 3:19 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I believe that this is actually something that both employers and employees have to learn: to trust each other and to be able to make use out of that trust. So, for me it is really comfortable because, for example, I can easily pick up my daughter from school in the afternoon without feeling guilty.

▤ 3:21 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I believe the topic of acceptance is pretty important, too. Everyone can come as they want, can wear what they want. I think that's something very obvious for us anyway.

● **Implementation/ adapting internally**

17 Zitate:

⊜ 1:5 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Back then, we were very much focused on our clients and our producers in terms of benefiting from what we do. But at the end of the day, I believe that it can only be sustainable, so you can only be seriously sustainable as a company if you also manage to create a workplace that meets the same requirements as what you actually want to do along the value chain.

⊜ 1:19 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

"Okay, we don't want the interns to always be the last ones sitting here.

⊜ 1:67 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

"Well, developing countries don't exist. And actually we don't want to use this term anymore."

⊜ 1:68 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then I started thinking about the "white saviour" complex. And I think it also came from the team, that someone said, I think we have to be really careful, let's rethink this! How do we have to communicate?

⊜ 1:71 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

That is to say, I think that with the CI we also stated that we want to work not only externally but also internally with a certain image of humanity.

⊜ 2:10 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

I would say that in the company generally there are no taboos. So people talk about everything. And freedom of speech. And freedom of opinion, is very big here. So you are not judged or criticized for speaking out something which is usually something you don't do.

⊜ 2:11 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

we have a unisex bathroom here

⊜ 2:13 ¶ 72 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Yes, and now all the bathroom stalls have, like, for example, female products, like tampons, and so on. Just to break it to be like: "Ah, okay, even in the men's store, there is something because sometimes it's full. So you end up going to the men's so which is no problem, but just to ease it a bit.

⊜ 2:14 ¶ 66 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, one of my colleagues was like, hey, but why don't we just put like, messages to lighten up the mood in the bathroom, so it's not so awkward and uncomfortable and shameful? Because it's not shameful. We are all humam beings, we all need to go to the bathroom. There's no human being who doesn't have to.

⊜ 2:22 ¶ 102 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Like, for example, the Christopher Street Day. So, we are we are invested in this and we live by this even our company, so everyone, regardless of your sexuality is part of it.

⊜ 2:36 ¶ 132 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So as I said, here, even in the company we do accept and live by everyone has a right and everyone has the same rights, and it's all equal.

⊜ 2:37 ¶ 132 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, even by being there at that demonstration, we're still not just demonstrating for the others, but we're also demonstrating for our friends at the company as well.

⊜ 3:1 ¶ 12 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And also this whole topic of working independently of time and place, which was what made me give some thought as a young mom.

⊜ 3:4 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work.

⊜ 3:18 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

What feels very natural for us, does not feel the natural for everyone I think. And as I have already mentioned, we can work anywhere and anytime.

⊜ 3:20 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But be also talk a lot about specific topics. We have leadership meetings in which insights are shared and we get educated indeed...

⊜ 3:22 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So there are certain values that guide us how we work and how we treat each other. I would say that it is lived (implemented) very well.

● **Implementation/ Advocacy**

6 Zitate:

⊜ 2:6 ¶ 48 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

And I would say that with GoSpring, we are for sure trying to break the norm, trying to make it okay to have an erectile dysfunction or to have a premature ejaculation. So, we are standing up for those people, we are trying to break the taboo and trying to break the shame topic, the shame point around this

⊜ 2:24 ¶ 108 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, we go offline, we have out of home campaigns as well. We had our out of home campaign in Berlin, we use the actually the Berlin tower, and we did put a cricket. And we wrote: "Geh' steif!". So translated it would mean: "go hard."

⊜ 2:34 ¶ 162 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We're provocative, so we're really not scared to actually put ourselves out there and use provocative words.

⊜ 2:35 ¶ 162 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We are all about breaking the norm. So, for example, using wordings which usually don't use, like: "Schlappschwanz" (engl. "Limp-dick"), which is something where people in Germany are like, "oh, okay, that's a vulgar word!", but this is how you get the attention of the people. So, by standing out by taking the things with ease, and yeah..

◉ 4:9 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

limited edition, which often expresses political statements or something else...

◉ 4:96 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Because of course, as we always act in all our communication, we always give a lot of thought to all the sentences that get posted or to all the wordings. And we have looked at the whole thing five times. And that's also how it is with critical comments and when we plan a major campaign and know in advance. "Okay, this and that will be coming soon, there will probably be several posts about it, there's a whole bottle for it in the shop or the posters are hanging in the cities",

● Implementation/ collaberating with NGOs etc.

1 Zitate:

◉ 3:31 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So where we really get involved as Ooia, it's mostly with topics that just go very well with us. Well, we work together with the CIJ, it's the "Center For Intersectional Justice". A lot of it deals with feministic issues. We also collaborated with "Wash United", it was about period poverty and so on.

◈ **Impulses**

5 Kodes:

● **Company Environment**

28 Zitate:

◉ 1:13 ¶ 44 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So it was more like: "Ah, why is nobody talking about this topic? It's totally crazy. And it's actually a good solution to many problems. Why? How can we make it a bit more public and maybe a bit sexier? And then we simply used the skills we had as Folkdays to bring a topic that is very unwieldy at first, namely supply chain law, closer to the general public.

◉ 1:17 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

for example, Chiara, (who just left), maybe as a small example, is our first intern who challenged us a bit about how we actually deal with interns. And not in the sense that we are cool with our interns and pay them, but also in the sense of being a bit of a "second-class employee". So they don't have the same perks as everyone else, the flexibility and blah blah blah.

◉ 1:25 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So I think it's always a bit of a negotiation process between all of us, but I think we manage quite well because I think we all stand wholeheartedly behind what we do and nobody optimises them self.

◉ 1:28 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then it could happen that in one or two months we say we won't do it anymore. Because the disadvantages are greater than the advantages.

◉ 1:32 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I'm firmly convinced that we come to better decisions when we make the decision together.

◉ 1:34 ¶ 68 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I think we address all the things that move us as a team or as individuals.

☰ 1:37 ¶ 74 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

some of the topics are also initiated by me, but actually everyone in our team is interested in these topic and maybe even informs themselves about these topics or is active or whatever

☰ 1:51 ¶ 110 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I think the commitment is the employees! Well, you can't separate them from each other. So it comes from each other and from the people who are here together. And I think everyone here in the team is quite political, activist and also interested and open.

☰ 2:23 ¶ 102 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, you can really that people are part of it to their heart and with their gut and with everything that have, so...

☰ 2:30 ¶ 132 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

They're all very invested. So as I said, here, even in the company we do accept and live by everyone has a right and everyone has the same rights, and it's all equal. So, everyone is emotionally invested, because we are friends here at the office at the end of the day. So, even by being there at that demonstration, we're still not just demonstrating for the others, but we're also demonstrating for our friends at the company as well. So, everyone is involved. So on a personal level as well.

☰ 3:3 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them speak up to so many controversial topics.

☰ 3:26 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something.

☰ 4:6 ¶ 51 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

For us, I think it's basically first of all that we only do something on a topic if we find it interesting and if we ourselves are 100 percent of the opinion. That means, for example, when there's a wave going around, like on Instagram on Black Tuesday when everyone posted those black tiles, where every company jumped on the bandwagon. If we think that's so good, then we'll do it. But we don't do it because everyone is doing straight. And now I've digressed a bit....

☰ 4:8 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

That means that if there is a topic that interests us, that interests our founders, then we take it up and then we give our opinion on it. If we stand behind it 100 percent and we say okay, that sounds right for us, …because we don't have any extremists or people who tend in any extreme direction working with us... And we say okay, for us this is the right thing to do, we feel that this is our opinion, then we also express ourselves and if we say that this is relevant for us in our private and professional lives, then we do it.

☰ 4:21 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But when we decide to speak out, the impulse usually comes from someone in marketing who has taken up the issue somewhere, regardless if he/she is in the management or our trainee.

⊜ 4:27 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And in the end, however, the decision is being made by thinking: "What would we do as a private person now?" We think the action is right, we think the action is good. It doesn't matter if someone thinks we're greenwashing and posting this just to jump on the bandwagon. If we personally would post it and say okay, I think it's good, then we'll do it as truefruits too, no matter what kind of reactions will come."

⊜ 4:35 ¶ 87 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

we sit in an open-plan office, which means that all of Marketing sits on one side and Business Operations sits on the other. But we as the marketing team can hear if someone in Business Operations talks about something. And in practice it's usually the case that we're sitting at the computer and suddenly someone says, hey, have you heard that topic XY?

⊜ 4:38 ¶ 87 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And if someone wants to join in the discussion, they do. It doesn't matter whether they belong to the marketing team or not. And that's actually how it happens. We just slide together and don't somehow go into a separate room because we think that no one here should notice. It's like a kitchen call here, that we communicate everything openly.

⊜ 4:42 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But when critical issues come up, four of us sit here and work on an answer in a comment.

⊜ 4:49 ¶ 99 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And sometimes these are times when we hold back, just as we would probably do in private, when we think, "this is too stupid for me to say anything". Then we don't say anything.

⊜ 4:54 ¶ 105 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And yes, the interpersonal aspect is also a huge factor, I think that's also very important for the decision-making process, that no one here feels like "Cancel Culture".... No one here feels somehow cancelled in their opinion, which they can express. Everyone can say what they want without thinking, "Ohh, if I say that,...that probably won't be perceived well. Then I'd better keep my mouth shut."

⊜ 4:55 ¶ 111 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

There are no hierarchies here.

⊜ 4:56 ¶ 111 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And I think that's also a very big point why everyone dares to speak out

⊜ 4:57 ¶ 111 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

he has to be able to deliver, but it has to be a good fit on a personal level too. We might have to share a few interests or maybe the other person will bring completely new qualities that are not yet in the team.

⊜ 4:58 ¶ 111 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

I think that's the most important thing, that we try to give everyone a platform and include them,

⊜ 4:74 ¶ 140 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't care whether the retailers want it or not. We do it anyway, that's exactly what we do, and it's noticeable that sometimes there's a bit of a headwind, or even quite banal complaints about bottle texts. Complaints about bottle texts or that a retailer doesn't want something on the shelf. But then it's more likely to be in individual stores than entire chains.

⊜ 4:79 ¶ 158 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But we don't want the perfect family product, we want a product for everyone. And we are perhaps personally a bit more communicative, more provocative. Or we're not at a loss for words, we say what we think.

⊜ 5:9 ¶ 31 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Everything we do is social, so all our social businesses are social to the maximum and have the same values, they all originated from the association, so they are all relatively congruent and our businesses are no different than our NGO or foundation.

● **Guided by purpose and values**

40 Zitate:

⊜ 1:3 ¶ 20 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the purpose of Folkdays is...well, by now I would probably say two purposes, but they are probably directly related. One is, to establish value chains, or simply a way of doing business that benefits everyone. Both people who work for us here and people who work for us in our supply chains, as well as me as a founder. So, by that I don't necessarily mean just monetarily, but also as people, so to speak, finding fulfilment and of course also benefiting monetarily, but that it is simply a way of doing business everyone is benefitting from.

⊜ 1:4 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

to create a workplace where the people who come here feel comfortable, are able to be their selves and hopefully also develop on a personal level.

⊜ 1:5 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Back then, we were very much focused on our clients and our producers in terms of benefiting from what we do. But at the end of the day, I believe that it can only be sustainable, so you can only be seriously sustainable as a company if you also manage to create a workplace that meets the same requirements as what you actually want to do along the value chain.

⊜ 1:14 ¶ 44 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then we realised that maybe there are other ways to change the status quo and that's how I think it came about. So it was more like: "Ah, why is nobody talking about this topic? It's totally crazy. And it's actually a good solution to many problems. Why? How can we make it a bit more public and maybe a bit sexier? And then we simply used the skills we had as Folkdays to bring a topic that is very unwieldy at first, namely supply chain law, closer to the general public.

⊜ 1:15 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But I do believe that we have a culture here where everyone is allowed to ask everything, and say everything, and question everything, and does so.

⊜ 1:21 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

hmm the moment we don't have a purpose anymore, we would stop doing it.

⊜ 1:26 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I don't have the feeling that this has ever really been in conflict. So maybe a situation in which we have to decide to sell via Amazon or not. Where we then decide quite clearly against it. But that's exactly the kind of thing that could be a decision.

⊜ 1:47 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And even if I had known that we would lose followers, I would have done it anyway, because she is so smart and I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart.

⊜ 1:64 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart. So it doesn't matter what skin colour, what religion and what background they have, of course!

⊜ 1:78 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Well, I think folkdays is one thing, the question is how does folkdays work in the system? In the meantime, I would no longer describe myself primarily as an entrepreneur, but rather as a "systempreneur", which is a topic we also deal with a bit in our book, that it is more about...looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system?

⊜ 2:3 ¶ 36 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

the purpose of GoSpring is to give men serenity to overcome their health challenges with ease. And the values will be to be discreet, to be approachable, to solve problems, and to actually enable others to not feel excluded.

⊜ 2:8 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So what drives us to certain topics is that everyone actually deserves to love. And everyone deserves to actually have a fulfilled sex life, regardless how, regardless with whom, and having something like erectile dysfunction, which so many men have, it is something which makes us which cranks us up, and which says: "Oh, we really need to do something about it!"

⊜ 2:20 ¶ 90 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

It has to be aligned with our purpose and with our values. So, we will not go to a rock concert where there's only music, I mean, it would be actually meaningless. So, there has to be a meaning behind it. And it has to be aligned with what we stand for. And what we want to reach.

⊜ 2:21 ¶ 96 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So we do not put any statements about politics or about what's happening in the world? Because we don't believe that it is our place to say something about war, or to say something about abortion rules in the USA. So no, we do stand out. We do state our opinion when it has to do with us and with what we often will with what we stand for, but that's it.

⊜ 3:6 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And these are basically three pillars that must never be neglected in the decision-making process.

⊜ 3:7 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Well, because we could of course easily say we are now expanding into the USA, but that would, for example, certainly contribute to social change and economic efficiency, but currently simply contradicts with the family-friendly, because they would have to travel far too much, or we would all have to travel way too much or something.

⊜ 3:8 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

You could also say we start producing, I don't know, a great shoe or whatever, but does the world need another shoe? It probably would somehow bring good money, but does it also represent social change? So the things we do have to somehow meet these three factors.

⊜ 3:21 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I believe the topic of acceptance is pretty important, too. Everyone can come as they want, can wear what they want. I think that's something very obvious for us anyway.

⊜ 3:22 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So there are certain values that guide us how we work and how we treat each other. I would say that it is lived (implemented) very well.

⊜ 3:25 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Because, you always have to evaluate if it's about jumping on a bandwagon or what are the issues that you stand for?

⊜ 3:26 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But I think there are topics where we clearly have a relation to and that are somehow part of our purpose topics, e.g. when it comes to feminism or something.

⊜ 3:32 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

There are things where we just know very clearly, okay, that matches us one hundred percent, but of course there are also things where you have the feeling that you would jump on a bandwagon, and we normally do not actively engage in. I think it's a discovery phase, but I would say there is almost no limit in the stories.

⊜ 3:36 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Look, even as a company, you can't deal with all topics.

⊜ 3:53 ¶ 120 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

It definitely has an impact on which products we launch, for example. Well, we could, we have now built a brand, and of course we could now just do a thousand things that make good money, for example. Well, we could just sell something else under the brand name Ooia. But the aim is that all products somehow solve a problem, that they are problem solvers. And at that moment, it already has an impact on company decisions.

⊜ 3:55 ¶ 162 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So, if you want to stand for more with your company than just your product, then it has to be really, very deeply anchored in your DNA, otherwise you lose more with it than you do well, then you better leave it.

⊜ 3:65 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

One of the pillars stands for social change. So there should be products that make a difference, that are new, that somehow make someone's life better. With the company the founders also stand for certain topics that stimulate social discourse. I mean, both of them

speak up to so many controversial topics. The second pillar is simply the economic profitability, and the third one is to work independently from location and time and yes, actually family-friendly work.

4:1 ¶ 21 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

"truefruits, no tricks." We always say we don't take ourselves too seriously, but we take our product all the more seriously for that.

4:2 ¶ 21 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

That means we put so much time into the development of a product until it really tastes one hundred percent perfect and we find the best mango among all 5000 mango varieties. And we don't take ourselves too seriously when it comes to communication. So "truefruits, no tricks" is what I would say are the values we represent here 100 percent.

4:3 ¶ 27 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So here (at truefruits) it's really the case that everyone can freely express their opinion and everyone can freely express their values. And that everything is actually in line with the values of the employees here, because that's what makes us special and, above all, because a lot of personality flows in here and it's not a predetermined line that has to be followed, but the opinion, no matter which employee it is, whether it's a trainee, an intern or a senior position, every opinion is equal and every personal value also counts here.

4:11 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Even if we think now, for example, the federal election is coming up soon, probably a lot of companies will do something on the federal election...but we would now say "okay, that's definitely a topic we could gain attention with, or as other companies would probably say, we can perform well with that", but we say "we absolutely don't feel like doing anything on that. We don't want to comment." Because our main goal is not to perform well, our main goal is to stay true to our line. Then we don't do anything about that.

4:13 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

if someone speaks out very strongly against a topic and says: "Hey, guys, if we do this, then I have a very strong stomach ache", or "I can't reconcile this with myself", then we don't do it! So if the team doesn't feel comfortable with it, cause they are also the ones who have to pay for it if something goes wrong, let it be with communication, in community management, e-mails or other channels, then it won't be implemented.

4:55 ¶ 111 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

There are no hierarchies here.

4:58 ¶ 111 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

I think that's the most important thing, that we try to give everyone a platform and include them,

4:62 ¶ 123 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But we were honest and we gave an honest answer. I think the most important thing is that we can just always go to bed at night with a clear conscience. We stayed true to ourselves and we didn't prostitute ourselves for anyone in order to get something in return.

4:79 ¶ 158 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But we don't want the perfect family product, we want a product for everyone. And we are perhaps personally a bit more communicative, more provocative. Or we're not at a loss for words, we say what we think.

◉ 4:87 ¶ 105 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But the main thing for us is just to have fun.

◉ 5:1 ¶ 13 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

we are allowed to work very freely and we believe that we can change the world in a positive, joyful and loving way and that is our core. That we always stay positive and always try to transform, to always change the world positively.

◉ 5:5 ¶ 19 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

brand activism yes, but for me Viva Con Agua is much more than a brand... ehm, Viva con Agua is an attitude towards life, a philosophy, a social business, a culture, simply more than a brand.

◉ 5:10 ¶ 40 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Again, we try to make as few side issues as possible and just try to be active and thereby get involved, but not jumping on all the issues that are out there all the time.

◉ 5:11 ¶ 40 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

We are very clear in our communication: "Clean drinking water, decent sanitation - and hygiene" and even if abortion is an issue in Texas right now, I might play that on the very personal level, on my social media profiles, but not Viva Con Agua, because Viva Con Agua cares about clean drinking water and decent sanitation and I think that's also very important for us because otherwise we would dilute ourselves.

● **Industry Environment**

15 Zitate:

◉ 1:38 ¶ 74 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

things are going wild in Afghanistan right now, I don't know if you've heard. At the end of the day, we also have two sisters from Afghanistan with whom we work, with whom we sell earrings, and I think it would be cool to push the whole issue of Afghanistan a bit more. No, so to say that we are positioning ourselves on this and simply draw a bit of attention to it, I think that would be something that would totally suit us. So that we are somehow taking on an activist role in relation to it.

◉ 2:2 ¶ 30 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So as so many men starting the age of 50, every third man actually suffers from erectile dysfunction or premature ejaculation. It is a problem which is really widely spread. Men really struggled to go to see a urologist because it is embarrassing, because it is a shame topic. And it's even worse for them to go to the pharmacy and to be facing a woman who's standing behind the counter to buy their Viagra or Cialis and so on.

◉ 2:4 ¶ 36 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

struggle with something like an erection really makes them feel like they are not part of the community, like they are excluded from the people around them, that they're different, that they're disconnected. So with GoSpring, we actually want to make those men feel like it is okay to be different. And that there are solutions to it.

⊜ 2:9 ¶ 60 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Because so many people suffer from it, but everyone deserves it everyone deserves, so every man deserves to have an erection. So, we see that people actually are hurt, they are insecure, and so on. So, we see that there is need there, which is why we stand up for it, and how do we live it within our organization?

⊜ 2:15 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

customer data. And we saw that only 6 or 7% of our customer base was actually homosexual. And we know that generally 10% of the population is statistically homosexual.

⊜ 3:25 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Because, you always have to evaluate if it's about jumping on a bandwagon or what are the issues that you stand for?

⊜ 3:40 ¶ 90 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

we had a campaign for the "International Women's Day", where we thought, okay, a lot of people just go like this: "Okay, tell us your story, what happened to you? What happened to you unjustly? Or so… Then we thought okay, a hundred other channels do that too. We might think more ahead and then we came up with a campaign, where we recorded common prejudices against women and how you have a quick-witted answer to them.

⊜ 4:17 ¶ 63 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We always want to test the limits a bit, but also in a good way, as long as a smoothie can do it. Because you have to think about it, so many people discuss about us and get upset about us and if you're really honest, they all get upset about stupid smoothie, a fruit puree. A fucking boring fruit puree where everyone takes their aggression on.

⊜ 4:26 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And then we also thought: "Are we going to comment on this? Or do we not comment on it?" Because we've been approached here so often about us being so racist and having such a bad image. "And if we do that now, then it's going to be so greenwashing." "Now you're posting this too and pretending to be the harmless ones", that's how we go through it in our heads.

⊜ 4:45 ¶ 99 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

The nice thing about social media is that when a hot topic comes up and someone writes a hot comment that doesn't really demand an answer, but rather shows provocation, then it's usually the case that the audience fortunately discusses itself into the ground. And that's the point where we like to stay out of it.

⊜ 4:47 ¶ 99 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But if someone writes underneath that "you are shit, I hate you".

⊜ 4:48 ¶ 99 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Because we know very well that the goal is for us to respond, so that they can escalate even more and that we can't get out of the situation, so that a discussion ensues that never ends.

⊜ 4:70 ¶ 140 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Retail is also becoming more and more cautious, because people are then also being approached in the market.

⊜ 4:74 ¶ 140 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't care whether the retailers want it or not. We do it anyway, that's exactly what we do, and it's noticeable that sometimes there's a bit of a headwind, or even quite banal complaints about bottle texts. Complaints about bottle texts or that a retailer doesn't want something on the shelf. But then it's more likely to be in individual stores than entire chains.

⊜ 4:81 ¶ 170 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

I have to say that we don't really look left and right. We don't look around and copy. We try not to let ourselves be influenced too much and think that if others come up with something cool that we like as well, then we say it's cool, happy for them! I hope there will be more! We do not even see it as competition.

● Macro Environment

12 Zitate:

⊜ 1:6 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system? And not to say "okay, now I'm an entrepreneur, now it's just about making Folkdays as big as possible".

⊜ 1:40 ¶ 92 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

No, not really. Not so far.

⊜ 1:42 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So we just say okay, we can't please everybody.

⊜ 1:48 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

For marketing reasons, we would never say: "Okay, we don't talk about these topics. We don't want to talk about racism openly because it's somehow unsexy or some people feel put on the spot."

⊜ 2:21 ¶ 96 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So we do not put any statements about politics or about what's happening in the world? Because we don't believe that it is our place to say something about war, or to say something about abortion rules in the USA. So no, we do stand out. We do state our opinion when it has to do with us and with what we often will with what we stand for, but that's it.

⊜ 4:5 ¶ 39 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Very sad, but true, things that we did six years ago...there are some things we would perhaps no longer do in the same way, because the consequences are probably a bit bigger now or we see the whole thing from a different angle now. Because six years ago many issues were simply not yet on the table. Nobody cared and realised back then, and now everything is seen and everything is criticised. And you can basically only do everything wrong.

⊜ 4:7 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

For us, it's like this: we do what we feel like doing and, let's say, we always keep the consequences in mind, but they don't slow us down.

⊜ 4:14 ¶ 63 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

For us, the idea can come from anywhere.

⊜ 4:68 ¶ 135 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't want to be "everybody's darling".

🔲 4:69 ¶ 140 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But that's another topic that is developing over time. It wasn't an issue four or five years ago. But it's just that people are becoming more and more cautious.

🔲 5:12 ¶ 46 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Purpose is the be-all and end-all, there would be nothing without Viva Con Agua. This whole number of Purpose nowadays, in the 21st century... so we started like that, so we've been like that for a very long time..we've always been a Purpose company, so I can't say anything else about it, except that it's always been our theme.

🔲 5:13 ¶ 52 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

No, we don't always give our opinion, that's not what Viva Con Agua is about, but we try to offer joyful engagement to the people.

○ Macro+Industry Environment / Not influenced

9 Zitate:

🔲 1:40 ¶ 92 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

No, not really. Not so far.

🔲 1:42 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So we just say okay, we can't please everybody.

🔲 1:48 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

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For marketing reasons, we would never say: "Okay, we don't talk about these topics. We don't want to talk about racism openly because it's somehow unsexy or some people feel put on the spot."

🔲 1:53 ¶ 116 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I don't know to what extent our producers will notice that we have fought for a supply chain law and so on.

🔲 2:21 ¶ 96 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So we do not put any statements about politics or about what's happening in the world? Because we don't believe that it is our place to say something about war, or to say something about abortion rules in the USA. So no, we do stand out. We do state our opinion when it has to do with us and with what we often will with what we stand for, but that's it.

🔲 3:28 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But especially in the stories a lot of things are being discussed, there are actually no limits, I would say.

🔲 5:10 ¶ 40 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Again, we try to make as few side issues as possible and just try to be active and thereby get involved, but not jumping on all the issues that are out there all the time.

🔲 5:13 ¶ 52 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

No, we don't always give our opinion, that's not what Viva Con Agua is about, but we try to offer joyful engagement to the people.

🔲 5:15 ¶ 40 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

and even if abortion is an issue in Texas right now, I might play that on the very personal level, on my social media profiles, but not Viva Con Agua,

Keine Kodegruppe

2 Kodes:

● Effects incl. scope

53 Zitate:

▤ 1:3 ¶ 20 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the purpose of Folkdays is...well, by now I would probably say two purposes, but they are probably directly related. One is, to establish value chains, or simply a way of doing business that benefits everyone. Both people who work for us here and people who work for us in our supply chains, as well as me as a founder. So, by that I don't necessarily mean just monetarily, but also as people, so to speak, finding fulfilment and of course also benefiting monetarily, but that it is simply a way of doing business everyone is benefitting from.

▤ 1:9 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

We don't have any added value in terms of our business, except that we put an incredible amount of energy into it. But it's not...Sure, at the end of the day I can now somehow give some talks on the supply chain law from time to time,

▤ 1:23 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Because if we sell more, so to speak, we can buy more products and thus also have more economic development in the regions.

▤ 1:45 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And Teresa also said when we announced it that we lost followers too.

▤ 1:46 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But I think, when we did the talk with her we also got some new followers, too so.

▤ 1:48 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

For marketing reasons, we would never say: "Okay, we don't talk about these topics. We don't want to talk about racism openly because it's somehow unsexy or some people feel put on the spot."

▤ 1:49 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And at the same time I also think that she will find it somehow exciting and perhaps also inspiring. And I do believe that someone like her, when she notices that Lisa also talks to Kübra, who wears a headscarf, and approaches the subject a little differently, then I think it is something that can impact her getting a different image of women who wear a headscarf.

▤ 1:52 ¶ 116 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I do believe that we make people a bit smarter, I would say that.

▤ 1:53 ¶ 116 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I don't know to what extent our producers will notice that we have fought for a supply chain law and so on.

▤ 1:54 ¶ 116 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So if there is a supply chain law, that means for their home countries that hopefully the supply chains will have to change a bit and less people will be exploited.

⊜ 1:69 ¶ 122 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I think that leads to that connection being very close, to our stakeholders as you define them more broadly. But yes, I think we are indeed aware of the responsibility.

⊜ 1:72 ¶ 26 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I believe that it can only be sustainable, so you can only be seriously sustainable as a company if you also manage to create a workplace that meets the same requirements as what you actually want to do along the value chain.

⊜ 2:27 ¶ 114 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, even if we get bad reviews, or bad comments on social media

⊜ 2:28 ¶ 114 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, even during the CSD, for example, we had different reactions to our truck. So, the majority really liked and laughed with us and said: "This is so cool, what we're doing." But there were still a few people who were saying, like: "What is wrong with you, or you are an example for what is wrong with the world". For stating something like this at a demonstration, which is supposed to be like all about equality and rights.

⊜ 2:29 ¶ 120 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Yeah, well, I was standing up there, and someone looked at me and told me, "what you're doing is what is wrong with the world!"

⊜ 2:31 ¶ 138 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

we've received very positive feedback for our actions at the Christopher Street Day. Customers actually recognized that us and were like: "We're your customers! Can I have some of your bags?"

⊜ 2:32 ¶ 138 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

We were even posted on Twitter where someone said, "Hey, I buy my stuff and on their platform. I got their bag. I'm so happy #DankeGoSpring." So no, they like it. They accept it, we get a lot of respect for it as well for speaking out the unspoken.

⊜ 2:33 ¶ 156 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

Because for now, the sales are increasing, of course, but we only know their sexuality after the order for the second time.

⊜ 3:12 ¶ 24 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I think you notice that and that is what makes the company successful.

⊜ 3:15 ¶ 30 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Yes, and it is not absolutely necessary that people go to the shop immediately and spend money. If you would judge on regards to that, then you probably wouldn't continue doing this. But the long-term effect of how authentically a brand is perceived, how it keeps itself profitable, how seriously it gets taken, I believe that's how the resulting sales resolute in the end.

⊜ 3:29 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Well, we work together with the CIJ, it's the "Center For Intersectional Justice".

🗐 3:34 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

I believe that as soon as you stick a big toe into one area, that you are somehow engaged with, then you are committed and there is no way to stop. Then, it means immediately, but why? So, imagine you are committed to one cause, e.g. to feminism, then don't let yourself seen with a take-away coffee mug ever again.

🗐 3:35 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So as soon as you stand up for something, you get the feeling you must cover all areas 100 percent, but that's just not how it works. I think you really need to develop a thick skin and stay true to yourself

🗐 3:41 ¶ 90 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

it was actually very well received, and we also had that in the newsletter. It also had a high opening rate, that is, those who ... things like that are really appreciated, when you take the extra effort to produce content like this. When you create such content, you also try to spread it on a cross-media level.

🗐 3:43 ¶ 96 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So we have little to do with the really tough internet trolls.

🗐 3:44 ¶ 96 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

We have a cool community

🗐 3:45 ¶ 96 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So there are sometimes, especially when you have addressed topics like Corona vaccination or something,…then sometimes there are people turn up as vaccination opponent.

🗐 3:47 ¶ 108 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

I do believe that this whole empowering topics, we can already see that many people are also inspired by it.

🗐 3:48 ¶ 108 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And at some point text us: "It's really cool, because of you I had the courage to do this or that" or something like that. So we really often get something back.

🗐 3:49 ¶ 108 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And I have the feeling that they (the founders) have a role model function.

🗐 3:50 ¶ 108 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

getting people inspired to see things differently or to enlighten them or so. We get a lot of feedback via social media and the feedback is really good.

🗐 3:51 ¶ 108 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

I believe that it also exudes or represents trustworthiness for people who want to work with us, who then simply know who they are dealing with. And if you stand up for certain topics online, then you cannot behave completely different and so on.

🗐 3:52 ¶ 108 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

I do think that this is also a door opener for many things, for example how to communicate with each other and so on.

🗎 3:62 ¶ 30 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But I think the long-term effect actually pays off for the company.

🗎 4:39 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Most of the time it's like this with us, funnily enough, that when we think something is coming, nothing usually comes.

🗎 4:47 ¶ 99 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But if someone writes underneath that "you are shit, I hate you".

🗎 4:59 ¶ 123 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

I think sometimes it does have an influence. We are approached by people, whether they are suppliers or external people we work with, whether they are investors or whatever... Of course, they know what they are getting into at the beginning.

🗎 4:60 ¶ 123 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

But I think it's also important that we are anonymous to the outside world because no one is shown, but still somehow so tangible, because we comment on everything and don't mince our words.

🗎 4:61 ¶ 123 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And if any investor or stakeholder or supplier asks us a critical question, we would never give any answer to make them happy. Instead, we simply give our honest opinion. If he doesn't like it, if he doesn't like it, then maybe we're not the right partner.

🗎 4:63 ¶ 126 – 129 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

influence does that have on your business, that you always express yourselves so controversially?

Anna

It's a bit of a two-way street, I would say.

🗎 4:64 ¶ 129 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

I don't think it has a big influence on business in the retail business, because you're a bit stuck in the social media communication bubble and you only get one side of it most of the time. And that is this outrage society, this cancel culture society, which gets upset about everything and shares everything and only shares all the bad news and everyone who somehow jumps on such a topic because they think, if I now also participate, then it is somehow relevant. And then I'm relevant and I've expressed myself politically. Those are two completely different groups.

🗎 4:65 ¶ 129 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We notice in retail that it definitely has no impact, if anything it has a positive impact. So we don't lose any sales because of it. As I've said before, people either love us or hate us, and I think the people who love us then are somehow bigger, and who think it's great that you don't just make a smoothie, but also speak out about things.

🗎 4:66 ¶ 129 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So we already notice, for example in our collaboration with influencers, that they are unsure about entering into a collaboration with us. "I've seen that this and that influencer has made negative comments about you. I don't know if I want to do anything with you guys because then I'll get all these haters on my profile and I might then lose followers or get negative comments just because I'm collaborating with you guys." That's also very interesting to see, because there are some and others. The ones who clearly say, I think you're good, I say my opinion and whoever doesn't want to follow me anymore, shouldn't follow me. Then they're probably not a loyal follower of mine anyway. And the others who say "ahh no, that's a bit too hot for me. I don't want to do it.

4:71 ¶ 140 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And customers question the right of it to be standing in the shelves. And of course the retailers try to avoid any confrontation, they don't want to take any risks.

4:72 ¶ 140 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

exceptional situation, because the issue with the Istanbul Convention was of course already an issue, which was very political, and then we still say, even if we can't stand up for it in the supermarkets, which is of course a much larger quantity than in the online shop.

4:73 ¶ 140 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Then we just produce a very small quantity. And then we take on all this effort. We wanted to comment on this. We don't care whether the retailers want it or not.

4:75 ¶ 152 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And the fact is that we are the market leaders in the smoothie sector. Of course the trade knows that, the trade can see that. And that's why they are aware that when they sell Truefruits, it goes hand in hand with limited editions and bottle texts.

4:77 ¶ 140 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't care whether the retailers want it or not. We do it anyway, that's exactly what we do, and it's noticeable that sometimes there's a bit of a headwind, or even quite banal complaints about bottle texts. Complaints about bottle texts or that a retailer doesn't want something on the shelf. But then it's more likely to be in individual stores than entire chains.

4:82 ¶ 170 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Of course we react allergically to people copying us, which also happens sometimes. Not only with the product, but also in wordings or ideas.

4:83 ¶ 170 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

There are many companies that grow much faster on social media, that probably act in such a way that they perform much better or run much more after the current trend. But then we don't care. Because at the end of the day, we always drive our line. We always do it the way we do it and that's how we're always consistently successful. And we really don't look to the right or left and don't really see anyone as competition.

5:4 ¶ 13 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

That we always stay positive and always try to transform, to always change the world positively.

5:6 ¶ 19 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

I understand of course and that is also very important, but we don't work so much in this political advocacy, but we try to change the world positively with civil society universal languages like art, music, culture.

🔶 5:14 ¶ 64 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Most of our staff come from voluntary work, i.e. they have been involved in Viva Con Agua at some point and have become staff members at VCA as a result. So from my point of view, it's actually a circle, it's all self-conditioning. Exactly, there would be no voluntary work without the main office and vice versa. I hope that helps a bit as an answer.

● Formulation

68 Zitate:

📄 1:6 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system? And not to say "okay, now I'm an entrepreneur, now it's just about making Folkdays as big as possible".

📄 1:7 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But to always look at: "What is my role in the system? What is our role in the system? Does it actually make sense to grow at all or can't we do it much better in other forms of activism?" And in that context, of course, I am, we are as a company, also very activist.

📄 1:10 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I think that as a human being, I always tend to move on a systemic level and always ask: "Okay, what role do we play? What's the best, what's the smartest?" So, I also often try to approach it very unpretentiously and say: "What is best for the impact and not what is the coolest or most exciting for me as a founder, although that often goes hand in hand."

📄 1:18 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I think it's cool because I think that in the beginning we were all really concerned about that and we were like: Yo, for an internship...We've all done shitty internships in our lives, that's what you do." And all the interns were always super happy here. But I think she's totally right. So I think she's totally right and that it's good that she dares to speak up like this, and to challenge, which is also a super uncomfortable task. And we are already thinking about how to achieve this flexibility that we now have.

📄 1:20 ¶ 50 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But you should continuously question whether it's actually cool the way we do it.

📄 1:21 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

hmm the moment we don't have a purpose anymore, we would stop doing it.

📄 1:26 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I don't have the feeling that this has ever really been in conflict. So maybe a situation in which we have to decide to sell via Amazon or not. Where we then decide quite clearly against it. But that's exactly the kind of thing that could be a decision.

📄 1:27 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

That's something that we discussed openly and then thought: "Do we want that? And now we've said we'll try it out and if it's worth it, then we'll continue with it.

📄 1:29 ¶ 56 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

But these are also things that we simply discuss openly in the team.

⊜ 1:30 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

but everyone gives their opinion on all important decisions. That definitely.

⊜ 1:31 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Maybe I also see my role in it a little bit... to support it, so we have situations from time to time where a staff member who is more socialised in a slightly different system says to me: "Hey Lisa, in the end you have to decide, you're the boss"

⊜ 1:32 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I'm firmly convinced that we come to better decisions when we make the decision together.

⊜ 1:33 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

So, yes, what we have in terms of structure is a feedback process,

⊜ 1:35 ¶ 68 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

we simply decide: "Okay, are we behind it or not?" And that is actually clarified relatively quickly.

⊜ 1:39 ¶ 80 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And I would probably propose it and post it into our social media group. And then everyone would probably say "yeah, let's do it" and then we would do it. Or just say: "Boor no, I think it's too hot, the situation is somehow too messy, I have a bad feeling about it...let's maybe wait a little bit on how it evolves." So, then it would just happen like this.

⊜ 1:44 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And the last time we had a short discussion was when I said I would love to have a conversation with Kübra Gümüca, who has written a book and is wearing a headscarf.

⊜ 1:47 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And even if I had known that we would lose followers, I would have done it anyway, because she is so smart and I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart.

⊜ 1:50 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Sometimes there is also a situation where I am also challenged in the team and someone says,

⊜ 1:55 ¶ 122 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

we always ask ourselves the question: "Does this make sense? Does this make sense for the impact? And does that make sense for us, and what kind of world we want to live in, and how does that fit together?"

⊜ 1:57 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

direction of a competence-based hierarchy. That means that not everyone always has a say in every little decision, but that actually everyone always knows who is well informed in which topics

⊜ 1:58 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I don't want to decide that by myself. I would only do it if we all stand behind it. And I don't want to co-work like that. I don't want to make a decision that you actually think is stupid. That's not how I want to work."

☰ 1:59 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I'm not the smartest one here in the team, we're all smart in our different ways.

☰ 1:60 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

that has of course led to the fact that we have a kind of culture where we are very, where we are very open and can also exchange ideas well and can also be critical sometimes, because we all like each other so much that we don't have to be afraid that something bad will happen.

☰ 1:61 ¶ 62 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

In the meantime, we have actually reached a point in large parts of our team where I think we have a very good level of communication.

☰ 1:63 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then one of the team members said, "That's cool, but only that we are aware of it. It's possible that people will come and hate us for inviting her."

☰ 1:64 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

I just don't give a shit about what people think who are against women wearing headscarves. We identify with people who are tolerant, open and smart. So it doesn't matter what skin colour, what religion and what background they have, of course!

☰ 1:68 ¶ 104 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

And then I started thinking about the "white saviour" complex. And I think it also came from the team, that someone said, I think we have to be really careful, let's rethink this! How do we have to communicate?

☰ 1:74 ¶ 44 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

How can we make it a bit more public and maybe a bit sexier?

☰ 1:78 ¶ 32 in Interview Folkdays_english.docx

Inhalt:

Well, I think folkdays is one thing, the question is how does folkdays work in the system? In the meantime, I would no longer describe myself primarily as an entrepreneur, but rather as a "systempreneur", which is a topic we also deal with a bit in our book, that it is more about...looking at a system and thinking about what do you want to change in the system?

☰ 2:14 ¶ 66 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So, one of my colleagues was like, hey, but why don't we just put like, messages to lighten up the mood in the bathroom, so it's not so awkward and uncomfortable and shameful? Because it's not shameful. We are all humam beings, we all need to go to the bathroom. There's no human being who doesn't have to.

☰ 2:16 ¶ 78 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

So we were wondering, perhaps, does this problem occur less with homosexuals or not? We were open to it. So then the idea popped up. Okay, perhaps we are very strong present in the channels were only heterosexual more heterosexual men are in.

☰ 2:26 ¶ 114 in GoSpring Interview Text.docx

Inhalt:

everyone has the right for their own opinion. So, even if we get bad reviews, or bad comments on social media, or wherever we leave them, because everyone has the right to express what they think.

⬛ 3:6 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

And these are basically three pillars that must never be neglected in the decision-making process.

⬛ 3:7 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Well, because we could of course easily say we are now expanding into the USA, but that would, for example, certainly contribute to social change and economic efficiency, but currently simply contradicts with the family-friendly, because they would have to travel far too much, or we would all have to travel way too much or something.

⬛ 3:8 ¶ 18 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

You could also say we start producing, I don't know, a great shoe or whatever, but does the world need another shoe? It probably would somehow bring good money, but does it also represent social change? So the things we do have to somehow meet these three factors.

⬛ 3:22 ¶ 48 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

So there are certain values that guide us how we work and how we treat each other. I would say that it is lived (implemented) very well.

⬛ 3:24 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

I think with this you are again and again in a discovery phase.

⬛ 3:25 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Because, you always have to evaluate if it's about jumping on a bandwagon or what are the issues that you stand for?

⬛ 3:28 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

But especially in the stories a lot of things are being discussed, there are actually no limits, I would say.

⬛ 3:32 ¶ 54 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

There are things where we just know very clearly, okay, that matches us one hundred percent, but of course there are also things where you have the feeling that you would jump on a bandwagon, and we normally do not actively engage in. I think it's a discovery phase, but I would say there is almost no limit in the stories.

⬛ 3:33 ¶ 57 – 60 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Okay, and the story is run purely by the two founders, so to speak, and there ... yes, the decision-making process just takes place with them, you are not involved as a team?

Katrin
Yes, exactly.

⬛ 3:36 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Look, even as a company, you can't deal with all topics.

⬛ 3:37 ¶ 72 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

We are still small, with us it is done very quickly. We either write a mobile message, for example, or Kati and Christine decide directly.

⊜ 3:42 ¶ 96 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Sometimes you are already a bit internally prepared for those comments. But genrally speaking we are still in a very cool place I think. So with us, criticism is often explained that way or relatively factual or something.

⊜ 3:46 ¶ 96 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

We can actually solve such things spontaneously very well. I think when you are in a corporation, the world looks very different, because there are very often loops, a hundred of loops. People have to approve this, approve that, approve everything before you have a good answer ready for social media. That would take far too long and I think they will have to prepare themselves completely differently for such circumstances.

⊜ 3:54 ¶ 138 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

Everything else you just have to decide to spend the time on. So, it's simply a company decision to say, we also invest time in it because articles have to be well researched and well prepared. And just writing a post here and there, that doesn't work, because then you shoot yourself in the knee, then you'd better just leave it. As a company, you have to decide to say, I provide time or time resources or my people somehow get this and that on hand to do such things well.

⊜ 3:57 ¶ 66 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

"Okay, this is a topic that I want to and can deal with, or is it really?"

⊜ 3:60 ¶ 72 in Ooia Transcript English.docx

Inhalt:

but I would say that also happens in a non-hierarchical way, very easy and quick. But there are no complex structures or anything like that defined yet.

⊜ 4:10 ¶ 57 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Then you always say "okay, do we think this is good enough that we would send it to our friends? Would you share with your best friends? Do you think this is funny enough or interesting or important that you would share the post and say hey look, we as truefruits just did something totally awesome, you have to check it out." And if that's not the case, if we don't get off on it, then we don't do it.

⊜ 4:15 ¶ 63 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And of course we always have brainstorming sessions where we ask: "OK, what else can we do now? We need new limited editions, or what theme do we express ourselves on?", and then we usually come up with a rough idea that we then work out.

⊜ 4:23 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And then we sit down with her and there are usually five or six of us. That also happens in our office...we have an open space office. Then we all just slide together with the chairs.

⊜ 4:24 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

When we really feel, I would say we sometimes have a feeling, that a topic is coming up, then we drop everything else and say: "Okay, we'll sit down together now". And then we discuss the topic first. Then we usually sit there for an hour or an hour and a half and think: "Okay, from what point of view are we looking at the whole thing now and what do we want to

achieve with it anyway? What is our message behind it?" Because for us, the whole thing always has to be well thought through. It can't just be good wording, which might be funny, but which might not work on a second level, but it has to be aligned.

⊜ 4:27 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And in the end, however, the decision is being made by thinking: "What would we do as a private person now?" We think the action is right, we think the action is good. It doesn't matter if someone thinks we're greenwashing and posting this just to jump on the bandwagon. If we personally would post it and say okay, I think it's good, then we'll do it as truefruits too, no matter what kind of reactions will come."

⊜ 4:28 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Because we've talked everything through, and there's no catch to it, we're not getting ourselves into the jam with it.

⊜ 4:29 ¶ 69 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We think about it in small groups of five, I'd say, then the graphic designer gets right down to it, drops everything and writes the post. And then, before we present it to the management, we always have a complete concept. That means it's usually just a social media post. Then we have already created the finished post. We have written the caption for it. We have defined the hashtags for it and have already thought about possible reactions and questions that could come from the management. We send it to our group - all communication is done via mobile phone - then we send it to our group and try to get it approved. And most of the time it works quite well, because we have already thought about a complete concept beforehand. And often it's also the case that we say, "OK, if we don't have feedback in the next 15 minutes, we'll just do it." And then we also comment on it.

⊜ 4:36 ¶ 87 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And in practice it's usually the case that we're sitting at the computer and suddenly someone says, hey, have you heard that topic XY? It is going through the roof! And then he says, okay, we have to do something about it. Okay, let's think about it! Then we just slide together with our chairs and think about it in marketing. And if, of course, someone else is doing something else at the moment, then he just goes away. But because everything is so open with us and we really do think things over in the heat of the moment, the other departments naturally notice too.

⊜ 4:37 ¶ 87 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

It's like a kitchen call here, that we communicate everything openly.

⊜ 4:40 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So when we prepare a single social media post, which is just a post, we naturally go through it roughly in our heads, could something happen? What could the reactions be like? But then it's not the case that we write down an answer beforehand, and when the question comes, we have the answer ready. We rather do that if the situation comes.

⊜ 4:43 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

Because of course, as we always act in all our communication, we always give a lot of thought to all the sentences that get posted or to all the wordings. And we have looked at the whole thing five times. And that's also how it is with critical comments and when we plan a major campaign and know in advance. "Okay, this and that will be coming soon, there will probably be several posts about it, there's a whole bottle for it in the shop or the posters are

hanging in the cities", then we prepare ourselves more, then we prepare an FAQ. We think about what possible questions will come up or what possible insinuations will be made, and then we come up with a rough answer that fits that. Of course, you can never say 100 percent what's going to happen and we don't publish this FAQ...Exactly, and then we prepare a little bit for it so that we have ways of argumentation, but this preparing for what could come also usually helps us in the decision-making process: "Do we really want to do it?" Because when we ask ourselves these questions and possible insinuations that can come up and we don't have conclusive answers. Then we know "hmm...it might not be so good to do something about that topic." But in theory, time is always the decisive factor for us, and we always publish it and then think about what we're going to answer.

⊜ 4:44 ¶ 93 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So it's not a well thought-out plan that we usually have.

⊜ 4:53 ¶ 105 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

And we never want to lose the fun of it. And that's how it is when we think about any Limited or so. If we don't have fun with any subject, then it's not a good one. We know that if we don't have fun with it, then we don't put love into it, then we don't put enthusiasm into it. Then we know that it won't be a round thing. And if it's not a round thing, then we don't publish it.

⊜ 4:67 ¶ 135 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We always say that even negative press is press and the more press, the better.

⊜ 4:68 ¶ 135 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't want to be "everybody's darling".

⊜ 4:84 ¶ 182 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

I think one thing that keeps us alive here or that keeps us from getting bored here, which is probably very, very different from many other companies, is that we never work according to any plans.

⊜ 4:85 ¶ 182 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

We don't have annual plans, we don't have half-year plans, we don't know at the beginning of the year how many Limited we have to launch so that we grow in comparison to last year or something. Most of the time we don't know more than a month before.

⊜ 4:86 ¶ 182 in Interview truefruits English Version.docx

Inhalt:

So a lot of things really happen out of impulse, and I can say that very clearly because I do the project management. I don't have a ready-made plan. And we are also very quick in the decision-making process. And we don't set ourselves any goals. Yes, we don't really have any goals. And that's why we can all work very easily and well, because we don't have any pressure. We absolutely have to do something now, even if we don't think it's so good, but that's the goal of the year or something. Yes, well, I also find that very exciting. That we work in a very agile way, more like real time marketing. Although we don't really like to use such terms, but we react very spontaneously.

⊜ 5:10 ¶ 40 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

Again, we try to make as few side issues as possible and just try to be active and thereby get involved, but not jumping on all the issues that are out there all the time.

⊜ 5:11 ¶ 40 in Interview_VivaConAgua_ENG.docx

Inhalt:

We are very clear in our communication: "Clean drinking water, decent sanitation - and hygiene" and even if abortion is an issue in Texas right now, I might play that on the very personal level, on my social media profiles, but not Viva Con Agua, because Viva Con Agua cares about clean drinking water and decent sanitation and I think that's also very important for us because otherwise we would dilute ourselves.